

# **Leo Strauss**

## **Nietzsche (1967)**

A course offered in the winter quarter, 1967

The Department of Political Science, The University of Chicago

Edited and with an introduction by Richard Velkley

Richard Velkley is Celia Scott Weatherhead Professor of Philosophy at Tulane University. He is author of *Being after Rousseau: Philosophy and Culture in Question* (University of Chicago Press, 2002), *Heidegger, Strauss, and the Premises of Philosophy: On Original Forgetting* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), and other works on philosophy.

With assistance from Antón Barba-Kay

## Table of Contents

Editor's Introduction	i-xv
Note on the Leo Strauss Transcript Project	xvi-xviii
Editorial Headnote	xviii-xix
Session 1: Introduction	1-15
Session 2: <i>Zarathustra</i>	16-31
Session 3: <i>Zarathustra</i>	32-46
Session 4: <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , aphorisms 1-23	47-60
Session 5: <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , aphorisms 24-34	61-76
Session 6: <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , aphorisms 35-60	77-92
Session 7: <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , aphorisms 63-185	93-110
Session 8: <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , aphorisms 188-203	111-126
Session 9: <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , aphorisms 204-212	127-138
Session 10: <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , aphorisms 224-239	139-151
Session 11: <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , aphorisms 240-255	152-168
Session 12: <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , aphorisms 263-296	169-180
Session 13: <i>Genealogy of Morals</i> , Part I, 1-6	181-194
Session 14: <i>Genealogy of Morals</i> , Part II	195-209
Session 15: <i>Genealogy of Morals</i> , Part III, 1-14	210-226
Session 16: <i>Genealogy of Morals</i> , Part III, 16-24	227-242
Session 17: <i>Genealogy of Morals</i> , Part III, 25	243-264

The texts and editions used in the course were:

*Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. Thomas Common, in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (New York: The Modern Library, 1950). Frequently, passages are read from the translation in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (Viking Penguin, 1954).

*Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Helen Zimmern, in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (New York: The Modern Library, 1950). Frequently, passages are read from the translation in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (Viking Penguin, 1954).

*The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Francis Golffing, in *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Anchor Books, 1956); and trans. Horace B. Samuel, in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (New York: The Modern Library, 1950).

This transcript was edited by Richard Velkley with assistance from Antón Barba-Kay.

For general information about the history of the transcription project and the editing guidelines, see the general headnote to the transcripts above.

## Session 1: no date

**Leo Strauss:** I will give a general introduction today; and then I plan to devote two meetings to a discussion of selections from Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*; the thirteen other meetings a student will read a paper.

[We will proceed according to the following schedule:

Sessions 4-12: the nine chapters of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

Sessions 13-16: *Genealogy of Morals*.

13 - Part I

14 - Part II

15 - Part III, paragraphs 1-15

16 - Part III, paragraphs 16-end]<sup>i</sup>

The most difficult, in a way, is the fourth chapter of *Beyond Good and Evil*, but this may very well be an inducement to some more daring among you to pick exactly this chapter.

We start best our reading of Nietzsche with *Beyond Good and Evil*, number 6. Read number 6, please.

**Reader:** "Gradually it has become clear to me what every great philosophy . . . at what morality does all this (does *he*) aim?"<sup>ii</sup>

**LS:** Here Nietzsche gives us a key to his interpretation, it would seem: we have to see what is the morality at which he aims. In another passage in the same work, in number 211 (which we do not have to read now), Nietzsche uses occasionally the expression, "the moral (the political)." So Nietzsche therefore advises us to raise the question: What is the political meaning of his philosophy? Let us remember briefly the political situation in continental Europe at that time. In the foreground was a conflict between liberalism and conservatism, and there was a kind of tail of liberalism which was more or less unwieldy, and that was socialism of course. Now Nietzsche has a great sympathy with the conservatives in general. One of his most straightforward sayings—everything good is inherited<sup>iii</sup>—is a conservative view, but it would be very wrong to believe that Nietzsche is a conservative simply. Let us turn to *The Dawn of Idols* (Skirmishes of an Untimely Man), number 43.

**Reader:** "*Whispered to the conservatives:* What was not known formerly, what is known, or might be known today; a reversion, a return in any sense or degree, is simply not

<sup>i</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>ii</sup> *Beyond Good and Evil*, 6, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966). (Hereafter cited as Kaufmann.)

<sup>iii</sup> *Twilight of the Idols*: "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man," 47. Strauss translates *Götzen-Dämmerung*, both here and in his published writings, as Dawn of the Idols. It is more commonly translated as Twilight of the Idols.

possible. We physiologists know that; yet all priests and moralists have believed the opposite. They wanted to take mankind back, to screw it back to a former measure of virtue. Morality was always a bed of Procrustes; even the politicians [have aped] the preachers of virtue at this point. Today, too, there are still parties whose dream it is that all things might walk backwards, like crabs. No one is free to be a crab. Nothing avails; one must go forward, step-by-step, further into decadence. That is my definition of modern progress. One can check this development and thus dam up degeneration, gather it, and make it more vehement and sudden; one can do no more.”<sup>iv</sup>

LS: So that is clear: Nietzsche was not a conservative. Conservatism is, from his point of view, absurd. There is no possibility of return—a point which is taken up very frequently in the liberal literature in this country at the moment. There is a word which is used, then, for Nietzsche if he is neither liberal nor conservative: Nietzsche is a “revolutionary.” But what kind of a revolutionary? The sign of it is his immoderate attack on Christianity in all of its forms, whereas at that time at any rate conservatism in continental Europe, and not only continental Europe, was of course Christian. Nietzsche presents himself as an atheist, but the peculiarity of his atheism is that it is an atheism of the *right*. Atheism was already at that time rather common as an atheism of the left: think of Communism and especially of Marx. Now this atheism of the right appeared fully formed long after Nietzsche’s death in the form of fascism, in contradistinction to democracy and Communism; and to that extent one can say that Nietzsche is the most important intellectual ancestor of fascism. That is of course very inadequate, as you will see soon, but it is something which cannot be simply dismissed. At any rate, the extremes touch each other.

There are important things which are common to Nietzsche and Marx—Marx, whom Nietzsche as far as I know never mentions and probably never read. (This could be checked probably by reading the work of Andler, Charles Andler, a French scholar who made a study of Nietzsche’s readings and studies;<sup>v</sup> and as far as I know there is no reference to Marx.) What they have in common is the radical criticism of “modern culture” with reference to a past in both cases (original communism in the case of Marx, and early Greece in the case of Nietzsche) but in such a way that *the* peak of humanity is in the future—and not an infinite goal, but a goal to be reached within a finite future. There is a phrase which Marx uses in one of his early writings, that consciousness does not determine being, but being determines consciousness<sup>vi</sup>. This could have been said, and in a way was said, by Nietzsche as well, but Nietzsche means something different from Marx, as you will see soon. Nietzsche’s version of this view that it is being which determines consciousness in a narrowed-down form then became Freud’s well-known teaching of the *id*. Marx looked forward to the complete socialization of man. And here we see the difference—of course very striking, because Nietzsche is, as people say, a radical individualist. As a consequence of this we can easily see that there is no program

---

<sup>iv</sup> *Twilight of the Idols*, “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man,” 43. *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Penguin, 1954), 546-47. (Hereafter cited as *Portable Nietzsche*.)

<sup>v</sup> *Nietzsche, sa vie et sa pensée*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1920-31).

<sup>vi</sup> Strauss might be referring to *The German Ideology* (1845-46).

of political action in Nietzsche, whereas there is such a program quite obviously in Marx. Owing to this fact that there is no program of political action, it was particularly easy to pervert Nietzsche politically, as was done by National Socialism. Marx's capacity to act is due to the fact that his overall view was completed rather early in his life, not later than the Communist Manifesto of 1848, but in fact before. Marx had reached the conclusion very early that it is necessary to overcome philosophy as ideology by social revolutionary practice. The opposite is true of Nietzsche; Nietzsche never overcame, and never intended to overcome, philosophy.

It is customary and justified to some extent to speak of three epochs of Nietzsche's work. Nietzsche comes first to sight as a classical scholar: that was his field of study. But at that time classical scholarship in Europe, and in particular in Germany, meant at the same time to be an educator, a former of human beings, because *the* higher form of higher education was the humanistic *Gymnasium*, as it was called, in which Latin and Greek were the core of the teaching. And therefore Nietzsche was concerned in his early period with classical scholarship, which was at the same time a concern with the formation of men. Furthermore, classical antiquity, which was what guided him, was understood very soon [by Nietzsche] (from the beginning, one could say) in a very unclassical light: in the light of Richard Wagner and of Schopenhauer. And the two documents of this stage of Nietzsche are *The Birth of Tragedy* and the *Considerations or Meditations Out of Season*. The implicit difficulty in this position was the fact that Wagner and Schopenhauer were in different ways alien to classical antiquity. There was [a]<sup>1</sup> difficulty intrinsic to classical philology at that time, namely, classical philology—that is, as indicated by the adjective classical, classical antiquity, *the* model, *the* classical. And yet in the nineteenth century a new approach had come to the fore, which consisted in undermining the concept of the classical: that was the historical approach, in conflict with the notion of *the* classical.

So these difficulties led to a break with Wagner and Schopenhauer and up to the so-called second period in Nietzsche: a break with romanticism in all its forms and an apparent surrender to positivism, modern science, and the historical approach. But that surrender was only apparent. The document of this stage is above all *Human, All Too Human*. Out of this adventure into positivism came the realization that positivism (and quite a few other things) are, in Nietzsche's words, nihilism; and therefore the problem was raised of how to overcome nihilism. And this led to Nietzsche's final position, the greatest documents of which are the *Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. Nietzsche could not have the importance which he has but for this final epoch. We must therefore limit ourselves entirely to it.

Now what is the most obvious peculiarity of Nietzsche's philosophy? What is it that distinguishes him in his *own* opinion from all earlier philosophers? Let us hear him from a fairly early writing, *Human, All Too Human*, the second aphorism.

**Reader:** "*Original error of the philosopher.* All philosophers share this common error: they proceed from contemporary man and think they can reach their goal through an analysis of this man."

**LS:** Namely, of present man.

**Reader:** “Automatically they think of ‘man’ as an eternal verity, as something abiding in the whirlpool, as a sure measure of things. Everything that the philosopher says about man, however is at bottom no more than a testimony about the man of a very limited period. Lack of a historical sense is the original error of all philosophers . . . .”<sup>vii</sup>

**LS:** We do not go into the question of whether Nietzsche’s judgment is correct or not, but it surely shows how Nietzsche thought at this particular time that *all* philosophers lack the historical sense, as he calls it; and this means, in other words, that he is the first philosopher who does not lack it. This would incidentally be confirmed by the *Dawn of the Idols*, a section when he speaks of Heraclitus,<sup>viii</sup> that older philosopher whom he admired most, and then he says, yes, but of course the historical sense also does not exist there. This goes through from the early to the later writings. Philosophy must be what it has never been before: historical. And we take this as our guide for the understanding of Nietzsche. The point of view from which we shall look at Nietzsche is indicated by the term “the historical sense,” a novel phenomenon [in the] nineteenth century. All thought is historically conditioned, as people say: there cannot be *the* true thought. Truth becomes therefore radically questionable. There cannot be in particular *the* true human thought regarding justice and virtue. Justice and virtue in their original claim become radically questionable, and therefore Nietzsche can present himself as the immoralist. Moreover, the very understanding of historical conditions is of course itself historically conditioned: not simply true, not objective, because if all thought is historically relative, the same would be true of the thought of the historicists. Now this historical sense was effective in Nietzsche from the very beginning. His first work is *The Birth of Tragedy*, the *birth* of tragedy, the genesis of tragedy, and this means also the historical genesis; and it implies also the death of tragedy, tragedy as a historical phenomenon. Do we have *The Birth of Tragedy* in translation here?

**Reader:** Yes, unless you are against the Golffing.

**LS:** No, I have no prejudices. Page 94, the second paragraph<sup>ix</sup>.

**Reader:** “As against this practical pessimism, Socrates . . . the most admirable gift of nature.”<sup>x</sup>

**LS:** May I add one point: that [as] you know, the book deals with *birth* of tragedy and therefore also the *death* of tragedy. Now the death of tragedy is symbolized as it were in Socrates, *the* representative of the untragic view of the whole. And this is connected with Socrates being the prototype of *the* theoretical man, the representative of the theoretical man. A few more passages [inaudible] no, that is too long. Well, I will try to summarize

<sup>vii</sup> *Human, All too Human*, 2. *Portable Nietzsche*, 51.

<sup>viii</sup> See “Reason in Philosophy,” 2.

<sup>ix</sup> *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Francis Golffing (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956). (Hereafter cited as Golffing.)

<sup>x</sup> *Birth of Tragedy* 15. Golffing, 94.

the main point. Socrates, according to the early Nietzsche, is *the* turning point in universal history because he represents the emergence of the theoretical man: the believer, that is, in the comprehensibility of nature and in the universal healing power of knowledge. Rationalism is optimism, for rationalism is the belief that reason's power is unlimited and essentially beneficial, the belief that reason=virtue=happiness. And this leads eventually in modern times to the belief in universal enlightenment, and therewith in the earthly happiness of all men within a universal state. Yet these extreme consequences—that is to say, contemporary socialism—indicate to Nietzsche sufficiently the fundamental wrongness of the movement started by Socrates. To this comes the critique of science, which started with Kant. Both the questioning of the power of science and the extreme political or social consequences show that “the time of the Socratic man has gone.” And from this Nietzsche derives the hope for a great future, a future which would be guided by the recollection of early Greece as represented by the tragedy of Aeschylus and [which] would perhaps surpass that past.

Now history becomes an explicit theme for Nietzsche in the second *Meditation Out of Season*, which is called “Of the Use and Abuse of History.” Nietzsche questions what was then taken for granted: that one should subject the whole past everywhere to historical study: universal history. History properly used is in the service of life, and it is abused, misused, when it frees itself from that service. It does not serve life if it becomes universal history, if it acts on the view that everything could or should become the object of history, of objective scientific history. And the reason is this: No human life (no healthy human life, that is) is possible without a horizon—that is to say, without the exclusion from possible sight of many things, without a line separating the bright and accessible from the dark and inaccessible.

Now, the abuse of history which Nietzsche has in mind was particularly visible and powerful in Germany. It can be described as a decayed Hegelianism. The problem of philosophy as it posed itself to Hegel can be stated as follows. All philosophers intended at all times the same: knowledge of *the* truth. But let us look at the achievement as distinguished from intention. The achievement is the disgraceful variety of philosophies. Well, if we limit ourselves to political philosophy, think only of the enormous differences between Aristotle's *Politics*, Machiavelli's *Discourses*, and Locke's *Civil Government*. The mere variety of philosophies, which formerly had led some people to skepticism, led [at] around 1800 (and especially in Hegel) to a new proposition: namely, the proposition that this variety is not disgraceful but necessary and reasonable, because every philosophy belongs to *its* time and only makes sense as belonging to its time. Of course Aristotle believed to present *the* political truth; and in this he was mistaken because in fact he revealed only the Greek political truth, the truth about the Greek *polis*. The same applies to the other political philosophers. Every philosopher is the son of his time, so that his highest, purest, and most abstract thought still shows his belonging to that time and therefore that his thought is dated and cannot be unqualifiedly, simply, eternally true.

But how could Hegel then be a philosopher? The answer is simple. Hegel asserts that there is an absolute time, and the philosophy belonging to the absolute time or to the absolute moment will be the true and final philosophy: his own. Roughly in this way, the



absolute religion is Christianity. According to Christianity, God has become man at a certain time, and this is *the* turning point in history. Originally this absolute religion existed in opposition to the world, to the *saeculum*. This opposition was overcome through the Reformation (which reconciled Christianity with the world—no monks, but the universal priesthood of every Christian) and the French Revolution. The Reformation and the French Revolution, which belong therefore together, bring about the reconciliation of Christianity with the world. As a consequence, the world has become completely Christian or Christianity has become completely secularized; these are only two sides of the same phenomenon. The end of time, of history, of *meaningful* change, has come. There will be all kinds of noises going on, but this will no longer be meaningful change; this will be some politicking and so of no interest. No *ideas* are anymore involved: all theoretical and practical problems have in principle been solved. And therefore, if this can be shown, one can say that the historical process from the beginning up to, say, 1820 is demonstrably rational because it leads up to a situation of this character.

Now, the successors of Hegel, those people with whom Nietzsche was concerned more or less directly, made one crucial change because this thought that there should no longer be any history after Hegel, that every thinker after Hegel would be an epigone, was not bearable, and not only because of human vanity. So what people retained was the relativity of doctrines to time while they denied the possibility of an absolute moment. The historical process is unfinishable. Man is *always* in the midst of the stream of history. I suppose that is a common view today still. Hence our most cherished beliefs or assumptions belong to our time alone, they cannot be simply true; and if we would try to say, well, there is change because there is progress, we have to consider that the idea of progress itself is part of the thought of our time and therefore dated. Our most cherished beliefs or assumptions are as relative to our time as all beliefs and assumptions, earlier ones, were to theirs of previous times. There cannot be *the* truth except *this* truth and its implication: namely, that all thought is historically relative. This truth, however, as Nietzsche points out in “The Use and Abuse of History” is deadly; it paralyzes the highest in man. That is the solution at which Nietzsche seems to have arrived in this relatively early writing. Now what can follow from that? What is the consequence of that? All truth is relative to time. This is true, but a deadly truth. There is first the possibility, of course: [the possibility] of turning one’s back to the truth toward life-giving delusions, or the fabrication of myth. Now this was out of the question for Nietzsche on the general ground that it would be incompatible with intellectual probity, a term which Nietzsche uses quite frequently, as we will see.

Yet Nietzsche shows also another way, or indicates it: *the* truth of the relativity of all doctrines to the time has been found out by a kind of induction from history. We look at the various doctrines and see how they belong to their times. History means here the objective, scientific, universal history as it was understood at that time and as it is still understood in the history departments. But the question arises: Is this kind of history, the scientific, objective, universal history, *true*? Does it open up a genuine understanding of history? And Nietzsche’s answer is no. The objective historian cannot grasp the substance of the past because he is a mere spectator, not dedicated or committed to

substantive principles of thought and action. For if he *were* committed to such principles, then he could no longer be an objective, universal historian open to all historical phenomena. It thus appears that there is another kind of truth, a deeper kind of truth, which one may call—although Nietzsche did not do that—subjective truth, compared with which all objective truth is superficial. This possible interpretation led later on to what is now called existentialism, which has two origins: Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. But our task will be to see how Nietzsche, as distinguished from existentialism and as distinguished from Kierkegaard, understood this possibility of a new interpretation of truth.

Now, for this purpose we will study *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Genealogy of Morals*. *Beyond Good and Evil* is in my opinion the most beautiful of his works, and this is of course a mere judgment, [a] preference. It surely doesn't mean that it was for Nietzsche himself the most important work. The most important work of Nietzsche was not written, not completed by him. It would have become somewhere a work entitled *The Will to Power*, which he never wrote. But Nietzsche wrote one book which he called the vestibule to his final work, and that is the *Zarathustra*. Therefore we shall begin our study of Nietzsche by reading selected passages from the *Zarathustra*, and that is what we will begin to do now. But we cannot possibly read this work as a whole. I gave once a lecture called, "On the *Zarathustra*"—that is the first time when I discovered your reading qualities, Mr. [student], you remember. That is when, about 10 years ago?

**Student:** About '58.

**LS:** '58. But still, we have some help, some authentic guidance for our selection of passages from the *Zarathustra*, and this is what I mentioned before: that according to Nietzsche himself the peculiarity of his philosophy is the historical sense. And therefore we begin to read a passage on page 60 of this edition<sup>xi</sup>, called "Of Thousand and One Goal." That is perhaps the simplest introduction to our problem. Now before we begin that, the title: he does not say of thousand and one goals, but of thousand and one goal. That doesn't come out in the translation? Well, it can be done in German; perhaps it cannot be done in English. There is a very famous book where you also find the singular: *Thousand and One Night*, known in English as *The Arabian Nights*, and the allusion to that title must be considered. Well, what is *Thousand and One Night*? They are exciting stories, of great variety, and that is what history in the ordinary understanding is. If we disregard the dull articles in historical journals but consider when someone comes up and is respected as a famous historian, and then he writes [or] tells an exciting story—whether the making of a president, the assassination of a president, or what have you. The difference, however, is that the stories in *Thousand and One Night* are told by a woman in mortal danger. This you can no longer say of all historians. But I have no doubt that Nietzsche had this in mind. And we also must not forget the word night; there is perhaps something like night in all history. Let us wait, whether that is true. Let us read the first sentence now.

---

<sup>xi</sup> *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (New York: Modern Library, 1950).

**Reader:** “Many lands saw Zarathustra, and many peoples: thus he discovered the good and bad of many things.”<sup>xii</sup>

**LS:** One should perhaps translate “evil” here, instead of “bad.” Does this remind you of something, this first sentence?

**Student:** *The Odyssey*?

**LS:** The beginning of *The Odyssey*, yes: “Odysseos who saw the towns of many men and understood their minds.”<sup>xiii</sup> But Nietzsche doesn’t speak of towns or cities but of countries, and above all of nations. You will see that nation is repeated, whereas countries is not repeated. Here one brief comment is necessary, and we have to turn to an earlier passage in *Zarathustra*, “Of the New Idol.”

**Reader:** “*The New Idol*. Somewhere there are still people and herds, but not with us . . . concerning the death of peoples.”

**LS:** Peoples or nations; he uses always the same word in German, *Volk*.

**Reader:** “A state is called the coldest of all cold monsters.”<sup>xiv</sup>

**LS:** This, by the way, is an expression used by M. de Gaulle, but he makes it in a different sense. I think he loves and pets this coldest of all cold monsters, what Nietzsche did not do.

**Reader:** “Coldly lieth . . . itself in laws and customs.”

**LS:** Here we may stop. So in other words, this is presupposed somehow here: the nations, the peoples, the *Völker*, not the states. Now, go on.

**Reader:** “But the state lieth in all . . . with stolen teeth that biteth, the biting one.”<sup>xv</sup>

**LS:** We do not need to go on here, but go on in the “Thousand and One Goal” [inaudible].

**Reader:** <sup>2</sup>“Many lands saw Zarathustra, and many nations: thus he discovered the good and evil of many nations.”<sup>xvi</sup>

**LS:** The point is here, the nations *are* what they *are* by their good and evil.

---

<sup>xii</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1.15, “The Thousand and One Goal,” trans. Thomas Common, *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 60.

<sup>xiii</sup> *Odyssey*, Bk. 1, l. 3. Presumably Strauss’s translation.

<sup>xiv</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1.11, “The New Idol.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 49.

<sup>xv</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1.11, “The New Idol.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 49.

<sup>xvi</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1.15, “The Thousand and One Goal.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 60.

**Reader:** “No greater power . . . must not value as its neighbor values.”

**LS:** So, in other words, it is not merely a fact that different nations have different notions of good and evil, it is necessary. If there are to be nations, there must be a variety of good and evils differing from nation to nation.

**Reader:** “Much that passed for good . . . his neighbor’s delusion and wickedness.”

**LS:** So the good and evil of different peoples contradict one another, they are not<sup>3</sup> merely different, and there is no possibility of mutual understanding. This today runs counter to the now preferred view according to which such mutual understanding is a relatively simple thing; you just travel there and get invited into homes and other things, and then you will understand them. But the difficulty is of course this: Zarathustra says this, but does not Zarathustra understand them all? And therefore there is a possibility, not indeed of a mutual understanding of the peoples but of an understanding of all of them. That is the difficulty. Now . . .

**Reader:** “A table of excellencies . . . voice of their Will to Power.”

**LS:** Now, will to power, this is the key term<sup>4</sup> in Nietzsche, as we will see especially when we turn to *Beyond Good and Evil*. Each nation has a single table of good up to which it looks. This reminds us of the two tables of the Decalogue: there are not two tables, but one. And its ground is not God, but the nation’s will to power—an easily misunderstood term, but Nietzsche will make quite clear what he means by that.

**Reader:** “It is laudable . . . the test and the meaning of all else.”

**LS:** The question is here this. You see he makes a distinction between the laudable, the good, and the holy. The question is: Is the holy the first, the highest, the high, the meaning of all things? At any rate, the meaning of all things—that is what Nietzsche, or Zarathustra, says—differs from nation to nation, of *all* things. That is the meaning of [inaudible] there is no possibility of an understanding, because you can easily translate word for word, but each word stands in the context of the language as a whole and therefore this is not a true understanding.

**Reader:** “Verily, my brother . . . that ladder to its hope.”<sup>xvii</sup>

**LS:** You see, here Nietzsche reminds us of a well-known explanation of national character, as we say, in terms of the land, the territory, the terrain, the climate—in other words, in terms of the environments. Nietzsche does not deny that, but he indicates the difficulty in the word “need,” which in German, *Not*, has a fuller, richer meaning than in English, which implies something in the nation itself which is not so simply reduced to environmental factors. Here we get also some inkling of what Nietzsche understands by will to power: overcomings. This will become clearer in the sequel.

---

<sup>xvii</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1.15, “The Thousand and One Goal.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 60.

**Reader:** “Always shalt thou be . . . the name which is alike pleasing and hard to me.”<sup>xviii</sup>

**LS:** That is important. Zarathustra *himself*—these are the Persians, by the way—Zarathustra himself, as distinguished from his name, is not a Persian. Otherwise he could not be what he is, this teacher of a universal doctrine, as we will see. Correspondingly, Nietzsche himself, whose relation to Zarathustra is a difficult question, is not simply a German and not even simply a European. Zarathustra’s and Nietzsche’s good and evil are not Persian or German. We will later on see what this means.

**Reader:** ““To honor father and mother . . . this table of surmounting—”

**LS:** Overcoming would be better.

**Reader:** “overcoming hung another nation over them, and became powerful and permanent thereby.”<sup>xix</sup>

**LS:** Bad.<sup>xx</sup> Eternal instead of “permanent.” Eternal. Who is that? The Jews. I think that is a very profound remark to the extent to which such historical remarks are possible; that is a great question, but to some extent they are even necessary. The remark of Paul that the message of God’s crucifixion is a scandal to the Jews and a folly to the Greeks throws more light on the difference between the Greeks and the Jews than many, many volumes. Whether Nietzsche’s statements here about the various nations have this depth is another matter. You see, here, especially when he speaks of the Jews, there is no reference to God or gods anywhere; only the Jews he says are eternal.

**Reader:** ““To have fidelity . . . became pregnant and heavy with great hopes.”

**LS:** Who is that? The Germans, yes, Teutons. *Treue*, which is “fidelity” [inaudible]. Loyalty is perhaps a better translation. What is the ordinary feudal expression in English?

**Reader:** Fealty was the specific—

**LS:** Fealty, yes; that might be a better translation. At any rate, here we get a better understanding of will to power: overcoming; overcoming *oneself*. That is a higher form of the will to power.

**Reader:** “Verily, men have given . . . as a voice from heaven.”

**LS:** So in other words, there is no divine origin of these goods and evils of the various nations.

---

<sup>xviii</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1.15, “The Thousand and One Goal.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 60-61.

<sup>xix</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1.15, “The Thousand and One Goal.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 61.

<sup>xx</sup> That is, the translation.

**Reader:** “Virtue always did man only assign . . . ‘man,’ that is, the valuator.”<sup>xxi</sup>

**LS:** Here we see that Nietzsche replaces now good and evil by values, a term which is very common in Nietzsche—not coined by Nietzsche, but I think it acquired its worldwide usage only as a consequence of Nietzsche’s writings. The ground of values is man’s concern with self-preservation. That is what Nietzsche says, but it will become clear very soon that what he understands by self-preservation is not what Hobbes or Locke or Rousseau understand by self-preservation. Here it is sufficient to say that he is speaking of the preservation of a *specific* self, of this or that nation. Now, let us go on.

**Reader:** “Valuing is creating . . . existence would be hollow. Hear it, ye who create!”

**LS:** So, the ground of values is creativity, whatever that may mean, which means surely that the values are not a mere consequence of the environment. There is an environment; there is as it were a matter of fact. But then a creative act is needed for the coming into being of the values. A national character itself is a product of such a creative act. Who the agent of that act is not yet said.

**Reader:** “Change of values . . . the individual himself is still the latest creation.”<sup>xxii</sup>

**LS:** The latest creation is the individual, and this means the original creations were nations—that is to say the nations and their variety. The creation of the individual is *the* radical change which may be also the death of the nations in the sense in which Nietzsche understands it here. Let us see the sequel, whether that is correct.

**Reader:** “Nations once hung over them tables of the good.”

**LS:** *A* table of the good.

**Reader:** “Love which would rule . . . not the origin of the herd, but its ruin.”<sup>xxiii</sup>

**LS:** Here we find an indication of Nietzsche’s critique of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, and of their brand of individualism. This is the calculating individual, the calculating ego, I—individual and ego are used interchangeably, as you may have seen—the calculating, selfish individual. And this is simply a phenomenon of decay of the herd. Nietzsche had spoken originally of the nation, of the *Volk*, in the plural; but he replaces that now by the herd, which is also a more negative expression. But the herd is still higher than the Hobbes-Locke-Rousseauan individual, which was there understood to be *the* maker of society.

**Reader:** “Loving ones . . . the creations of the loving ones — ‘good’ and ‘evil’ are they called.”

---

<sup>xxi</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 15, “The Thousand and One Goal.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 61.

<sup>xxii</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 15, “The Thousand and One Goal.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 61.

<sup>xxiii</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 15, “The Thousand and One Goal.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 61-62.

**LS:** So the ground of nations and the ground of values is love and anger (with greater emphasis on love), not calculation.

**Reader:** “Verily, a prodigy . . . upon the thousand necks of this animal?”

**LS:** This paragraph is apparently wholly unprepared. Nietzsche expresses here, or Zarathustra expresses here, the need for compelling—for overcoming this praising and blaming of which he had spoken so highly, namely, the national or particularistic praising and blaming. Nevertheless this is prepared by the reference to the emergence of the individual. This kind of praising and blaming is no longer possible in the long run.

**Reader:** “A thousand goals have there been hitherto . . . Thus spake Zarathustra.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

**LS:** There is *now*—presumably as the consequence of the emergence of the individual, not of the low, calculating individual of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, but of the individual in another sense—there is now a need for a universal goal, a goal for all mankind which will make possible humanity, in the sense here of the human race as a whole, as a unity. And this is what Zarathustra/Nietzsche is after: the one goal of humanity. This is of course open to a very obvious objection, namely [that] there is not yet *the* goal for humanity. This was written in about 1884 and published at that time, so the situation is not so greatly different from the situation of today. What would be the obvious objection to that? Was it true that up to 1884 there were only national goals?

**Student:** [There was] the goal you have spoken of earlier, which resulted from the Socratic optimism.

**LS:** Well, one could say that this was for small, tiny groups of men; this was not . . .

**Student:** Christianity.

**LS:** Exactly. And apart from Christianity?

**Student:** Socialism.

**LS:** Socialism, very good. These are the two most obvious examples. After all, Christianity claims to be a universal religion, to say nothing of Islam; and surely also socialism was meant to be universal. Now what are Nietzsche’s reasons for discarding those goals? Well, perhaps we have an answer to that, and we know what Nietzsche answers. But let us hear him, or Zarathustra. On page 6 of your edition, we read only this last paragraph of section 2 there.

**Reader:** “When Zarathustra was alone, however . . . that *God is dead*?”<sup>xxv</sup>

---

<sup>xxiv</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 15, “The Thousand and One Goal.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 62.

<sup>xxv</sup> *Zarathustra’s Prologue*, 2. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 6.

**LS:** Whatever that may mean—that has now become a common topic, even in the [Chicago] *Sun-Times*, as I understand—at any rate, this is merely an assertion which disposes of the claim of Christianity, or Islam for that matter. Now what about socialism, which was compatible with atheism, as we know at least from Marx and Engels? In order to see that, let us first turn to page 10, bottom, this speech of Zarathustra to the people.

**Reader:** “When Zarathustra had spoken these words . . . I am not the mouth for these ears.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

**LS:** We will consider later what speech preceded this reaction of Zarathustra.

**Reader:** “Must one first batter their ears . . . ‘We have discovered happiness,’ —say the last men, and blink thereby.”<sup>xxvii</sup>

**LS:** This is Nietzsche’s reply to socialism. Whether it is fair or unfair is another matter, but that is what it is. No shepherd, and one herd; no ruler, no government anymore; the withering away of the state, as it is called; the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Happiness: that is the key word, *plus* culture, of course, because who would wish to have happiness without appreciation of art and the other paraphernalia? For Nietzsche, this is the ultimate degradation of man. Now when he says that mankind does not yet have a goal, he presupposes both his rejection of Christianity and his rejection of socialism or crypto-socialism. Nietzsche, as you will have seen from this passage, does not predict that this is the future of man. This was done later on by Spengler, in his *Decline of the West*,<sup>xxviii</sup> when he spoke of this final state of *fellahin* existence, which the whole human race would achieve in the next centuries. But for Nietzsche man still has a choice; as he says, you still have chaos within yourself.

In fact, there is only one alternative to the last man, and that is what Nietzsche calls the superman. Superman is of course a word which has become unbearable because of the comic strip or whatever it was, but it is necessary to translate. Therefore Kaufmann translated it as overman, which is quite intelligible, but the older translation is necessary to keep in mind because of one crucial connotation. While the word superman is probably a coinage by Goethe (but not in the same meaning as in Nietzsche), the adjective superhuman must be remembered. Superhuman: that was an older word; the superhuman is the divine, or at least the angelic; but what Nietzsche wishes to make clear by the use of the noun superman is that this is the highest *man*, not a superhuman being. And this throws further light on what I mentioned before about the historical character of Nietzsche’s thought: this situation, that man stands at the crossway between the last man and superman, has never existed before. The highest and the lowest possibility come to sight only now, with Nietzsche and with those after him who learn from him. Nietzsche is then of course compelled to give an account of how it was possible in the past to believe

<sup>xxvi</sup> Zarathustra’s Prologue, 5. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 10.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Zarathustra’s Prologue, 5. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 10-11.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, 2 vols. (1926).



in “eternal values” as distinguished from this historical possibility which emerged toward the end of the nineteenth century and which, according to Nietzsche, accompanies modern man from now on. It becomes then necessary to get some provisional familiarity with what Nietzsche understands by the overman or superman, and that is done in the two preceding speeches of the *Zarathustra*. But before we turn to that, I would like to know whether there are some difficulties which you sense up to this point and which we may profitably discuss. If not, then we begin and see how far we come.

**Reader:** “When Zarathustra arrived . . . man is something that is to be surpassed.”

**LS:** Or overcome; it is the same word.

**Reader:** “to be overcome. What have ye done . . . rather go back to the beast than overcome man?”

**LS:** You see what will to power means? Will to power: overcoming; creating something higher. Will to power does not exclude the cruder forms of will to power, sheer authority, but that is not what is important to Nietzsche.

**Reader:** “What is the ape to man? . . . more of an ape than any of the apes.”<sup>xxix</sup>

**LS:** Nietzsche in a way accepts the doctrine of evolution, as you see here, which means the radical denial of the view according to which the good is the old or the ancestral. If the good is the old, the best would be the oldest; but here we find that the oldest is the lowest—worm or even amoeba, perhaps. So he accepts to that extent the progressivist view, a movement from the worm via the ape to man, but he accepts this in a radically different sense. This evolution is not due to external or accidental change, nor is it on the other hand teleological, directed toward one end. But it is a creative impulse, a creative impulse without a foreseen end. That is one thing. The word shame has here to be considered. If man’s beginnings are good, if the ancestors are greater than we, then the posture towards the beginning is that of reverence. If the beginning has been ruined by sin, then the posture is one of repentance, sorrow. For Nietzsche it can only be, because of this beginning, one accompanied by a painful sense of shame: there is too much of the worm and the ape in us. It is not a feeling of sin nor [of] pride, for the low past cannot be eradicated. It will be with us as long as there are human beings. The low, this feeling of shame and therefore of concealing, is of course in a certain tension with probity, which admits and perhaps even proclaims these human, all too human things in us. This, I believe, is the most striking difference between Nietzsche and Freud. In Freud we have the willingness to uncover the most disgraceful things, a probity in this sense; but the other element is not so pronounced as in Nietzsche, namely the sense of shame.

**Reader:** “Even the wisest among you . . . The Superman *shall be* the meaning of the earth!”<sup>xxx</sup>

---

<sup>xxix</sup> Zarathustra’s Prologue, 3. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 6.

<sup>xxx</sup> Zarathustra’s Prologue, 3. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 6.

**LS:** In other words, there is no sense or meaning of the earth independently of the will. It is not a *telos*, an end, in and by itself, but only has meaning if men will it.

**Reader:** “I conjure you . . . poisoners are they, whether they know it or not.”

**LS:** This seems to be a mere association of ideas; the superman is the meaning of the earth and now the meaning is to remain loyal to the earth, and this opens up a new vista against the other-worldly ideas which Nietzsche rejects. Remain loyal to the earth, the earth understood of course in contradistinction to heaven. Be radically earthly.

**Reader:** “Despisers of life . . . higher than the meaning of the earth!”<sup>xxxix</sup>

**LS:** Now Nietzsche says, as you see, God died. Previously he had said God *is* dead. There is a process, which Nietzsche studies to some extent in the writings which we shall read, in which God “died.” The superhuman is therefore no longer God, but can only be the superman.

[end of tape]

---

<sup>1</sup> Deleted “an intrinsic.”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “In the Thousand and One.”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “only.”

<sup>4</sup> Changed from “word.”

## Session 2: no date

**Leo Strauss:** Nietzsche was a philosopher, they say; and therefore his guiding concern was that of all great philosophers before him. But the character of philosophy or philosophizing undergoes a radical change in his work, and this is sometimes indicated by applying to him the term poet-philosopher or philosopher-poet. This is insufficient, for the reason that poetry itself undergoes a radical change in his thought and work. A new kind of poetry emerges or is anticipated—you might read the speech of poets in the *Zarathustra*. Now, his link with the philosophic thought preceding him is most obviously that philosophic consideration which distinguishes him, in his view, from all earlier philosophers: this X is indicated by the term history, the historical sense. Now this has a prehistory before Nietzsche, and a very great history after Nietzsche. Our whole problem today, we can say, is this: that we are aware of this radical change which has taken place in the nineteenth century and is affecting all of us today. Our problem is not to take this as a matter-of-course starting point, but to see in it a problem. This requires that we do something which is usually not done, namely, that we try first to understand how the prehistorical philosophers (if I may say so)—say, from Plato to Kant, inclusively—how they understood that X which we now call history, historicity, or what have you. A very important ingredient of this study would be also to understand how that x which we call so easily history was understood in the Bible. It is fairly common to say, for example, of the Old Testament prophets that for them God is rather the God of history than the God of nature; that has been said very frequently and there is some obvious plausibility in this statement. But the mere fact that this thought, the God of history, is untranslatable into the Hebrew of the prophets shows that there is a very big problem there. And *mutatis mutandis* this applies also to the philosophers.

Yet nevertheless, although this is in a way the most urgent problem for us today, history seems to be too narrow a starting point for coming into contact with Nietzsche's comprehensive and innermost thought. What Nietzsche was concerned with is sometimes called the whole fact of man, if that is a sufficient translation for the German *die ganze Tatsache von Mensch*. The whole fact of man: no longer the mind, the soul, or any ingredient of man, but the whole man. Nevertheless, we must see then how this concern with the whole phenomenon of man becomes, acquires, its decisive character by the historicity of man. We can say that man's being is a historical being: man's historicity is the salient point in the whole fact of man, the totality of man, as we shall see.

Now, one word on the literature on Nietzsche, which is of course very large: I mention only *the* high point in that literature, although I know that it is inaccessible to most of you, and that is a work by Heidegger on Nietzsche,<sup>52</sup> especially the first volume. This work incidentally is at the same time the best introduction to Heidegger's own thought. Heidegger's book on Nietzsche is the high point in the interpretation of Nietzsche

---

<sup>52</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche, vol. I: The Will to Power as Art*, trans. David Ferrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

because Heidegger is the greatest and most profound continuator of Nietzsche's thought. As for the other question which arises at the beginning of such a course, Nietzsche's precursors or forerunners: *the* work on that subject is by a French scholar, as I mentioned last time, Charles Andler, volume one of his work on Nietzsche. I have never read this, but this is the book always referred to. From my experience I have found especially helpful for the understanding of Nietzsche two men: Rousseau and Goethe. In one of the earlier writings, *Meditations Out of Season*, number 3, "Schopenhauer as Educator," Nietzsche mentions three educators of the nineteenth century: Rousseau, Goethe, and Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer is in fact Nietzsche, as Nietzsche has made clear in a later remark about him. And this is one reason why Rousseau is so important, this indication. Now, Rousseau and Goethe do not play a great role in the conventional histories of philosophy, but this does not settle the issue, because Nietzsche is not a conventional philosopher; there is some radical change in philosophy.

Regarding Goethe, I like to refer to what his friend Schiller said about philosophy and poetry in a letter to him, a remark obviously due to the impression Goethe made on Schiller. "The true human being is the poet. Compared with him the philosopher is only a caricature."<sup>53</sup> When you remember Plato especially, you see the radical change, a change which has left its traces in Nietzsche, as we will see soon. Nietzsche surely teaches that the true philosopher is not a contemplator, beholder, spectator, theoretical man, but a creator. And creator: that is in Greek *poiētēs*, a poet.

As regards Rousseau: Nietzsche loathed him, but this is not yet a sign of irrelevance. I mention here only one point. One of the works of Rousseau, which is quite well known, is his *Confessions*—a work countering (in a way parodying) Augustine's *Confessions*, based against Augustine with the view that man is good, i.e., that there is no original sin. It is in a way a parody of Augustine, but Rousseau's parodies are not limited to the *Confessions*; they occur also in other works of his, especially in a work called *Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques*, *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques*—Jean-Jacques is the first name of Rousseau. And there is a line (whether Nietzsche was aware of it or not is irrelevant) joining Rousseau's parodies of Christianity and the Bible in general and Nietzsche's parodies, especially in the *Zarathustra*—a parody which is indicated by the very title of the work, because "Thus Spoke" is of course the formula used by the prophets: Thus saith the Lord, spoke the Lord. I mention also the emphasis which Nietzsche puts most visibly in the *Zarathustra* on his solitariness. There is a work of Rousseau with the title *The Dreams of the Solitary Walker*, *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*.<sup>54</sup> But this question regarding Nietzsche and Rousseau cannot be treated properly as long as we do not possess an adequate interpretation of Rousseau in the first place.

---

<sup>53</sup> Letter from Schiller to Goethe, 7 January 1795, *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, hrsg. Emil Staiger (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1966), 81. For an English translation, see *Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe*, trans. Dora L. Schmitz. 2 vols. (London: George Bell & Sons, 1887), vol. 1, 371.

<sup>54</sup> *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth (New York: Harper Colophon, 1982).

Now we prepare our study of Nietzsche by glancing at some passages in the *Zarathustra*, and the reason is this: Nietzsche has not written his main work; only materials for it are available. They were posthumously edited under the title “Will to Power.” Yet the *Zarathustra* and only the *Zarathustra* is the vestibule of that unwritten main work. The reading of those selected passages is meant to give us a first inkling of Nietzsche, of his greatness as well as his misery. Now in order to get some provisional understanding of what Nietzsche understood by history, we began by reading the speech “Of Thousand and One Goal”—thousand and one goals, for there are a thousand and one nations. The nation has become a problem for Nietzsche, as we have seen. You will see in chapter 8 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, the chapter entitled “Nations and Fatherlands,” a prosaic discussion of this problem. The nation is here understood as the most comprehensive grouping hitherto which has a character or spirit of its own, a spirit peculiar to it, a unique spirit. The nation thus understood takes the place of the state, as we have seen before. Now we cannot possibly go into the implications of this notion of the nation or of the *Volk* and its mind, a notion prepared by Rousseau and Montesquieu and greatly modified and deepened by Hegel and German Romanticism. But the key point is that for Nietzsche this has become a problem. Incidentally, what concept exercises the same function in present-day social science that the nation in this wide and deep sense exercised in early nineteenth-century thought?

**Student:** Society, culture.

**LS:** Yes, society and culture: the relation between these two things is of course one of the difficulties. Now, what did we learn from this section of the *Zarathustra* regarding history? The core of history is the variety of creative acts through which the variety of nations came into being. This variety—he mentions only four, and even those not by name: the Greeks; the Persians; the Jews; and the Germans, the Teutons—this variety does not constitute a rational sequence as in Hegel. There is no connection between these various creative acts. But then, in a way which is not explained here, a new creation takes place, radically different from the creation of nations, and that’s of course the creation of the individual, of the creative individual, who is to be understood in contradistinction to Hobbes’s or Locke’s calculating and selfish individual, who is in turn lower than the nation or the herd. The individual which Nietzsche has in mind is higher. Now as a consequence of the emergence of the individual in the high sense, there arises a need for a table of values which is no longer national or particular, but universal. Nietzsche denies that there is such a table of values already in existence. He thus tacitly rejects the claim, first of Christianity—and we have read his formula, “God is dead”—and he rejects tacitly also the claims of what for Nietzsche is secularized Christianity, i.e., socialism and similar things. This socialism leads to the last man, the death of creativity accompanied of course by noisy talk *about* creativity. That would not refute Nietzsche—for example, there is now in existence a thing called instruction in creative writing, which is not a refutation but rather a confirmation of what Nietzsche says. The last man does not come about due to a creative act, but merely due to a phenomenon of decay. In order to avoid that fate there is a need for a new creative act surpassing all creative acts of the past: the creation of the superman. What that means is not yet sufficiently clear and will not

become sufficiently clear to us now, but we have to know a little bit more. I suggest that we continue where we left off last time. That is in the prologue, paragraph 4.

**Reader:** “Zarathustra, however, looked at the people . . . a rope over an abyss.”<sup>55</sup>

**LS:** I would translate “between the beast and superman,” because animal, from the Latin original, means a living being, and man is the *animal rationale*, the rational animal. The word which Nietzsche uses in German, *Tier*, clearly is not applicable to man, and means beast. So man, that is clear, is not a beast because he is in between the beast and superman. The explanation of that is this: the will to power, of which we have heard, is indeed the essence of all living beings, but there is nevertheless an essential difference between man and beast. And the question which we must consider is whether the notion of the will to power common to all living beings does not obscure this difference. Or is perhaps the will to power primarily seen in man, and then as an afterthought applied to all life so that the will to power comes into its own only in the case of man? What I mean by that you can see by turning to the very beginning of the *Zarathustra*. Let us read the first three paragraphs.

**Reader:** “When Zarathustra was thirty years old . . . me, mine eagle, and my serpent.”<sup>56</sup>

**LS:** So in other words, without living beings, and especially without man, the heavenly bodies, the sun (or the earth for that matter) *is* not what it is. So man is truly the center, and we will later on see this more fully in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Man is not the *telos*, the end, the goal of the evolutionary process—the evolutionary process to which Nietzsche had referred in the preceding speech—but once man has emerged, not intended by the process, he becomes necessarily the center. Now, go on.

**Reader:** “A dangerous crossing . . . an *over-going* and a *down-going*.”<sup>57</sup>

**LS:** Man differs from the brutes not by his rationality but by his exposedness; and therefore the traditional notion of virtue, in which reasonableness and virtue play a considerable role—these things are no longer virtue in Nietzsche. If you will turn to the second paragraph from the bottom on page 9.

**Reader:** “I love him whose soul is lavish . . . desireth not to keep for himself.”

**LS:** He does not desire to preserve himself. “Lavish” is also not a good translation: [rather], wasting himself, giving himself away—*sich verschwenden* in German. That is understood in opposition to self-preservation. Now, turn to the sixth paragraph on page 10.

---

<sup>55</sup> Zarathustra’s Prologue, 4. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 8.

<sup>56</sup> Zarathustra’s Prologue, 1. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 3.

<sup>57</sup> Zarathustra’s Prologue, 4. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 8-9.

**Reader:** “I love him whose soul is so overfull . . . . His heart, however, causeth his down-going.”

**LS:** This only as a further confirmation of that; they are at the opposite pole of self-preservation. The creative man is the man who sacrifices himself, but Nietzsche prefers the word: who “*wastes*” himself. Now let us turn to page 15, the third paragraph.

**Reader:** “Sombre is human life—”

**LS:** No, uncanny would be a better translation. Uncanny is human existence.

**Reader:** “Uncanny is human existence, and as yet without meaning: a buffoon may be fateful to it.”<sup>58</sup>

**LS:** That refers to an incident which has happened and has been described. “Uncanny is human existence, and *still* without meaning.” We have got an inkling from the section “Of Thousand and One Goal,” how this has to be understood. For *hitherto*, up to now, there are only the particular tables which have lost their power; and they have lost their power, as Nietzsche intimated there, through the emergence of the individual. But we can say with equal right and perhaps more intelligibly [that] they have lost their power through the historical sense. The awareness of the variety, and the awareness of the fact that each has as high a claim to being *the* table of values as any other, this has deprived them all of their original claims. Now the speeches on the superman and on the last man were spoken to the people, but the people laughed at these speeches, and Zarathustra is left alone with the corpse of the tightrope dancer. That was the incident which had happened there, and the tightrope dancer is of course a reference to man being a rope between the beast and the superman. Let us turn to page 17, section 9.

**Reader:** “Long slept Zarathustra . . . who will follow me because they want to follow themselves—and to the place where I will.”<sup>59</sup>

**LS:** This indicates the problem. Nietzsche wants to have companions who are individuals, who wish to follow themselves and not any universal law or tablet, tables of value; and yet they should follow him in a way where he wills. This is a great difficulty, which we will observe in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

**Reader:** “A light hath dawned on me. Not to the people . . . the herd’s herdsman and hound!”

**LS:** A herd’s. You remember that he used herd and nation equivalently in the “Thousand and One Goal.” Nietzsche has in mind a group consisting of genuine individuals, whatever that may mean.

---

<sup>58</sup> Zarathustra’s Prologue, 7. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 15.

<sup>59</sup> Zarathustra’s Prologue, 9. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 17.

**Reader:** “To allure many from the herd . . . the lawbreaker—he, however, is the creator.”

**LS:** Let us read the four last paragraphs of this section.

**Reader:** “I am not to be a herdsman . . . . Thus let my on-going be their down-going!”<sup>60</sup>

**LS:** This is then the great change: from now on Zarathustra will address only individuals, only solitaires, and no longer herds, societies, nations. I think we should also read the final segment of the prologue, number 10.

**Reader:** “This had Zarathustra said to his heart . . . the proudest animal under the sun, and the wisest animal—”

**LS:** “Wisest” is not the proper translation. The cleverest; surely not “wise.”

**Reader:** “and the cleverest beast under the sun.”

**LS:** Slyest would be too low; cleverest, *klug*.

**Reader:** “they have come out to reconnoitre . . . would that I were wise from the heart like the serpent.”<sup>61</sup>

**LS:** But it is always *klug*, not “wise.” I don’t say that this is an adequate translation, but it is better. Does anyone have Kaufmann’s translation?

**Student:** Yes; he says “wise,” too.

**LS:** I see; I think that is not . . . all right.

**Reader:** “But I am asking the impossible. Therefore do I ask my pride to go always with my cleverness. And if my cleverness . . . . Thus began Zarathustra’s down-going.”<sup>62</sup>

**LS:** There is only one point which we should note now and can note now: the two animals, the two beasts who belong to Zarathustra, the eagle and the serpent. Do they remind you of a precedent?

**Reader:** “Be ye therefore as wise as serpents and as guileless as doves.”

**LS:** Yes; so what is Nietzsche’s change?

**Student [also reader]:** From guilelessness to pride.

---

<sup>60</sup> Zarathustra’s Prologue, 9. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 18-19.

<sup>61</sup> Zarathustra’s Prologue, 10. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 19.

<sup>62</sup> Zarathustra’s Prologue, 10. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 20.



**LS:** Yes, and from doves to eagle; you must not forget that too. That indeed is . . .

**Student:** What is the meaning of the phrase “going under”?

**LS:** With respect to the sun: setting. In German, setting and “going under” are the same: *untergehen*. This has to do with a notion of Nietzsche which will become clearer to us as we go on. The parts of the day—the forenoon, the noon, the afternoon, night, and midnight—are an important part of his symbolism, as must have appeared already from some passages here.

**Student:** Will you explain a little further the image of the tightrope walker with the man who comes out of the house and jumps over him? Because I noticed at the very end of 9, he says “over the loitering and tardy will I leap,” which I assume refers to that.

**LS:** Yes, but this story of the man who jumps over the other man on the rope and then [causes him to] break<sup>1</sup> his neck has also another meaning: one cannot make such jumps; there is a certain continuity to be preserved in spite of the radical change. If we were to try to understand the symbolism of the *Zarathustra*, we would have to devote the whole course to it and we would not come to an end. So I propose I make only a few points which are rather obvious. Of the very greatest importance for our primary theme, the problem of history, is the first speech of Zarathustra to his companions, “Of the Three Metamorphoses,” which we shall read now.

**Reader:** “*The Three Metamorphoses*. Three metamorphoses of the spirit . . . the heaviest longeth its strength.”<sup>63</sup>

**LS:** Does this remind you of something, the reference to the heavy and heaviest? That played a great role in the passage which we read in “Of Thousand and One Goal.” Read only the sixth paragraph of “Thousand and One Goal.”

**Reader:** “Praiseworthy is whatever seems difficult to a people—”<sup>64</sup>

**LS:** Yes. You see, that is the same word, *schwer*. I would prefer—although it doesn’t sound very good—I would prefer the translation heavy: hard, heavy, difficult.

**Reader:** “whatever seems indispensable and heavy is called good . . . the most heavy, that they call holy.”<sup>65</sup>

**LS:** We deal here with the same problem: the first stage of the spirit, of the mind, is that of the camel, which bows, which accepts many heavy burdens.

**Reader:** “What is heavy? so asketh . . . in order to mock at one’s cleverness?”

<sup>63</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 1, “The Child with the Mirror.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 23.

<sup>64</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 15, “On the Thousand and One Goal.” The reader reads from Kaufmann’s translation in *The Portable Nietzsche*, 170.

<sup>65</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 15, “On the Thousand and One Goal.” *Portable Nietzsche*, 170.

**LS:** No, here it is wisdom.

**Reader:** “Wisdom,” advisedly. [Reader resumes] “Or is it this . . . so hastens the spirit into its wilderness.”<sup>66</sup>

**LS:** So that is the first metamorphosis, indicated, symbolized, by the camel.

**Reader:** “But in the loneliest wilderness . . . . Innocence is the child, and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a game—”

**LS:** Play, playing.

**Reader:** “playing, a self-rolling wheel . . . the town which is called The Pied Cow.”<sup>67</sup>

**LS:** You must have seen the connection between these three metamorphoses and the metamorphosis spoken of in “Of Thousand and One Goal.” Hitherto we knew only that the particular goods and evils are no longer possible, those of the nations. What Nietzsche seeks for is the goal of humanity; the radical change was due to the creation of the individual. But what is the essence of the individual understood as the creation? Now we have here the answer. The symbol is the lion. The individual replaces all oughts, all tables of values given to him, by “I will.” But this “I will,” this radical liberation from all holy or sacred given laws, is not sufficient because it is only freedom *from*, as Nietzsche calls it later on, and not freedom *to*. The freedom *to* requires a third stage in which new values are set, created by the third stage of the mind, which he indicates by the child. The individual in the highest sense is the revolutionary, but the revolutionary can only be the provisional stage.

Now is there any other point . . . . You see where he says, toward the end [of 1. 1], now in this last stage of the child the spirit or mind “wills *its* will; he who has lost the world gains his world.”<sup>68</sup> In the stage of the camel or lion, the mind or spirit did not yet will *its* will. There is something [here] which reminds one of Hegel, Hegel’s famous three stages. The meaning, the substance, is different but the resemblance is by no means superficial. You must also not forget the three stages, the three metamorphoses which Nietzsche himself underwent: The first stage of his reverence for the classical tradition understood in the light of Schopenhauer and Wagner; the turning away from it, the rebellion against it—the desert in which he lived for many years as a solitary—the lion; and finally, when he thought he had discovered the land again in his last stage.

The next speech, the second speech, is “Of the Chairs of Virtue.” Now this is a parody of the traditional doctrine of virtue, especially late classical; but in a way it means also Socrates and Plato. Reason=virtue=happiness=tranquility of the mind and the soul is here

<sup>66</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 1, “On the Three Metamorphoses.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 23.

<sup>67</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 1, “On the Three Metamorphoses.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 24-25.

<sup>68</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 1. Strauss’s translation.

compared to a stage in which cows find themselves after having taken their food, to be pleased with themselves, *sibi ipsi placeat*. And the indication here is that this traditional notion of virtue is the preparation for the last man. If it is characteristic of the last man that he says we have discovered happiness, the traditional philosophers seem to have said the same thing. Therefore they prepare only the last man. Now let us look on page 26, in the translation, at the bottom.

**Reader:** “He who leads his sheep . . . accord with good sleep.”<sup>69</sup>

**LS:** In other words, the whole teaching of virtue has the function to bring about a stage of sleeping well. And let us take page 27, the third paragraph.

**Reader:** “Well, also, to the poor in spirit . . . if one always give in to them.”

**LS:** You see here also the parody of biblical passages at the same time. Page 28, paragraphs 3 and 4.

**Reader:** “Now know I well what people sought . . . no higher significance of life.”

**LS:** This reminds us—although I don’t know whether Nietzsche remembered it when he wrote that—of the passage in Plato’s *Apology of Socrates*,<sup>70</sup> which you will remember, and which is not exactly in agreement with what Nietzsche<sup>71</sup> says. Then he turns to a criticism of another ingredient of the tradition; how did he translate that?

**Student:** Backworldsman.

**LS:** That is not . . .

**Student:** Afterworldly.

**LS:** Yes, that is better. But I don’t see how one could render it in English. Does anyone have a notion? An afterworld, you know, that is formed from the Greek metaphysics: after the physics. After [or] behind the world, and those who seek a behind or after the world or after this life. Now page 29, paragraphs 3 and 4.

**Reader:** “This world, the eternally imperfect . . . it came not unto me from the beyond!”<sup>72</sup>

**LS:** A mere assertion here, without any attempt to establish this view: the afterworld is a mere human creation, so it is derivative from man and an impoverishment of man. Now let us see, toward the end. “There were always many morbid people among those who.”

<sup>69</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 2, “On the Chairs of Virtue.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 26.

<sup>70</sup> Perhaps Strauss refers to *Apology* 31a, where Socrates suggests that without him the Athenians would spend their lives in slumber, unless the god should send someone else to sting them.

<sup>71</sup> The original transcription has “Socrates,” which Strauss may have said in error.

<sup>72</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 3, “Backworldsmen.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 29.

**Reader:** “Many morbid ones have there always been . . . and doubt was sin.”<sup>73</sup>

**LS:** So in other words, one sees here that this is directed against Romanticism in its German form: the longing for the Middle Ages, which is not the same as the Middle Ages themselves. But this is in a way the same spirit. Now the issue is continued in the next speech, “Of the Despisers of the Body,” and I think we should read here the beginning, the first page or so. Now the afterworldly men and the despisers of the body are the same: another life after this, the true world after this world, and the true life without the body—at least without the present kind of body.

**Reader:** “To the despisers of the body will I speak . . . . The body is a big sagacity—”<sup>74</sup>

**LS:** No; a great reason. One can be more literal than that.

**Reader:** “The body is a great reason, a plurality . . . instrument and plaything of the big reason.

**LS:** Of *thy* big reason. And what is “thy big reason,” to make it quite clear?

**Student:** The whole body.

**LS:** The body, yes.

**Reader:** “‘Ego,’ sayest thou . . . it dwelleth in thy body, it is thy body.” (I.4)

**LS:** Let us stop here. So the ego, the consciousness, the great theme of philosophy from the days of Descartes until the nineteenth century: this ego is only the foreground, the surface phenomenon. In the depths behind the ego is the self. The best in man is not reason or consciousness but the self, and the self *is* in a way the body. That this is not so simply and literally true, we will see; but Nietzsche uses this extreme expression in order to be heard. Now these things, the distinction between the ego and the self, have become very common and popular through the influence of Freud, as you will know. The next section’s title is hard to translate: it is a German pun. How does he translate it?

**Student:** He says “Joys and Passions.”

**Another Student:** Kaufmann [has] “On Enjoying and Suffering the Passions.”

**LS:** Well, it is a German pun: “*Von den Freuden- und Leidenschaften*.” “Passion” translates the German *Leidenschaft*—*Leiden* is passion, suffering—and Nietzsche coins the word *Freudenschaft*. Let us read only the first four paragraphs.

**Reader:** “My brother, when thou hast a virtue . . . and also the hunger of my bowels.”<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 3, “Backworldsmen.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 31.

<sup>74</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 4, “Despisers of the Body.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 32.

**LS:** Now let us stop here. If the substance of man, if you can say so, is the self, then the virtues can only be individual virtues. And the general terms which we use, like moderation and courage, can only be very poor indications of what the true greatness of a particular individual may be. A radical change in the understanding of the soul is what Nietzsche is after and hence in particular of the phenomenon of crime, of which he speaks in the next section. But the great question here, which we will see very visibly in the first chapter of *Beyond Good and Evil*, [is this]: This new understanding of the soul, this true understanding of the soul, is it scientific? It is a depth psychology, one can say, but is it scientific? And is it *meant* to be scientific? That's a question which we must discuss later. Now, let us see: "Of Reading and Writing," do you have that? Let us read the first few paragraphs.

**Reader:** "Of all that is written . . . find that blood is spirit."

**LS:** That reminds one of the statement that the self is the body; this is another way of putting it, of intimating the same thing.

**Reader:** "It is no easy task . . . those spoken to should be big and tall."<sup>76</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. The phenomenon which he has in mind is, in a general way, I think, known to all of you: namely, the great abuse accompanying the increase in literacy and in writing. Now what Nietzsche has in mind when he says it is not easily possible to understand foreign blood (foreign blood meaning the blood of anybody else, another self) is that this knowledge is, as they have called it since, *personal* knowledge, not scientific, objective knowledge. Nietzsche means however that not every "person" possesses personal knowledge. There are people of extreme shallowness.

**Student:** It seems strange to me that he says that one would wish to address proverbs to great men. Normally one thinks of a proverb as something that is given to the populace who can't understand something . . . .

**LS:** Yes, but Nietzsche has in mind other things. At the beginning, in the early times of [inaudible] think of Heraclitus' aphorisms and other sages who spoke only in brief sentences expressing a long and deep thought, an enigma to be solved. Let us read a few more paragraphs.

**Reader:** "The atmosphere rare and pure . . . . It wanteth to laugh."<sup>77</sup>

**LS:** So the knowledge which is worthwhile requires daring, courage, laughter. Let us read the fourth paragraph from the end of this section.

---

<sup>75</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 5, "Joys and Passions." *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 34.

<sup>76</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 7, "Reading and Writing." *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 39.

<sup>77</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 7, "Reading and Writing." *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 39-40.

**Reader:** “And when I saw my devil . . . the spirit of gravity . . . .”<sup>78</sup>

**LS:** “The spirit of heaviness.”<sup>2</sup> . . . The spirit of science which doesn’t say anything which cannot be proven, and which is not accessible to all equally (in principle at least)—that *is* the spirit of heaviness, according to Nietzsche. But the heaviness is also at the bottom of the nation, as we have seen; that is what he designated by the emblem the camel, the animal willing to bear burdens. There is later on in the *Zarathustra* a section called “Of the Spirit of Heaviness, or Gravity,” which you might perhaps read. Do you know where it is? I think it is in the third part. Read toward the end, “On many ways and manners did I come to my truth.”

**Reader:** “By many ways and windings did I arrive . . . . Thus did I answer those who asked me ‘the way’—”

**LS:** *The way.*

**Reader:** “For *the way*—it doth not exist!”<sup>79</sup>

**LS:** Now that is a necessary consequence of everything he had said before, that the substance of man is the self in his uniqueness, in his peculiarity. Hence there cannot be *the way*, but only a way for each. And of course the great question is: If this is true, can there be philosophy? There can be science, but science is here understood as something ultimately superficial, not reaching into the depths of the problems. The question concerns only philosophy. We must keep this in mind. So there is the spirit of heaviness, the need for support by others or by universal or general concepts or laws or rules. But Zarathustra attempts to be free from that need for a support, for any railings, and this is the meaning of creativity. There is no support except the creative act itself. Now, of the next chapter or next speech, we will read only the end.

**Student:** I wonder if you can repeat the distinction between science and philosophy in Nietzsche’s [inaudible].

**LS:** Well, there is such a thing as science. But the question is: Does science give us any light regarding the most important questions? Is this an intelligible proposition, or should I say more about it?

**Student:** No, I wanted to find out how *he* distinguished between them; you said one was unable . . . I just couldn’t hear you.

**LS:** Nietzsche does make such a distinction, and we will see it when we come to *Beyond Good and Evil*, where he speaks about [inaudible] perhaps we will even read a section in the *Zarathustra* where he speaks of it. But does this make sense in itself, this assertion? Yes? Can you illustrate it?

---

<sup>78</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 7, “Reading and Writing.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 40-41.

<sup>79</sup> *Zarathustra*, 3. 55, “The Spirit of Gravity,” 2. *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 217.

**Student:** On the ability or inability of science to [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, to answer the most important questions.

**Student:** I don't understand what you want me to do.

**LS:** Do you have an example?

**Student:** Whether it can or cannot?

**LS:** Or both; it doesn't make any difference. But just so that we understand that a bit better, in case there is [inaudible] and I hope there will be some people who will question that.

**Student:** The investigation into the nervous system, the brain.

**LS:** Well, that is possible, is it not? And yet why does this not help us in understanding the most important things?

**Student:** You can't find answers to questions of good and bad, ultimately.

**LS:** Yes, that would be the simplest example: what they call the values. Or if we take an older formulation made by the founder of positivism, Comte: science answers only the question of how, not of why. The questions of why, of the ultimate why, remain unanswered; and yet they are the most important questions.

**Student:** If one didn't consider the questions of why as the most important, then science would answer [all our questions] . . . .

**LS:** Yes, for science itself, but the question is whether the abandonment of the question of the why does not deprive science of the highest claim which it originally had—namely, to answer these questions. Now let us read only the end of this next section, the last paragraph.

**Reader:** “But by my love and hope I conjure thee: cast not away the hero in my soul! Maintain holy thy highest hope! —”<sup>80</sup>

**LS:** The hero in the soul: that is the true self. And by not casting it away, by reserving it, it can be a creator. Now we have to skip quite a bit. There is a section then called “Of the Flies of the Market-Place,” where he makes the distinction which [inaudible] the phenomenon I think is known to us. We can read that perhaps, the beginning of that section “Of the Flies of the Market-Place.”

---

<sup>80</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 8, “The Tree on the Mountainside.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 44.

**Reader:** “Flee, my friend . . . worthless without those who represent them—”

**LS:** “Represent,” that is not sufficient: “who—”

**Student:** “Set them forth?”

**LS:** Yes, how do you say this in the theater language?

**Student:** Produce.

**LS:** Yes, produce them.

**Reader:** “without those who produce them: those producers the people call . . . the people and the glory: such is the course of things.”<sup>81</sup>

**LS:** Well, this phenomenon has gained in importance immeasurably since Nietzsche’s time. Now there are other [inaudible] “Of the Love of the Next, the Nearest.”

**Student:** “Neighbor Love,” page 63.

**LS:** No, I think since it is already rather late, I propose that we may return to that next time and that we read now the first speech of the second part, “The Child with the Mirror.” We remember that child from the first speech, “Of the Three Metamorphoses”; there is some connection here. Zarathustra has a dream, and in the dream he sees a child approaching him with a mirror. “Oh, Zarathustra,” do you have that?

**Reader:** Yes, on the same page. ““Oh, Zarathustra’—said the child . . . the hour hath come for me to seek my lost ones.”<sup>82</sup>

**LS:** The fate of [inaudible]. This presupposes the whole first part. Zarathustra has a “teaching.” The word “teaching” is underlined in the original; underlinings are quite rare here, in this book. And so his teaching is disfigured by [inaudible] and Zarathustra/Nietzsche appears like a devil. And that was the fate of Nietzsche for quite some time, in a sense even up to the present day. He decides to return. And then this is followed by the next one, where he comes on the Blessed Isles. Read paragraph 4 from the beginning, 4 to 6.

**Reader:** “Once did people say God . . . ye could well create this superman.”<sup>83</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. God is a conjecture. As Laplace said to Napoleon, “*Je n’ai pas besoin de cette hypothèse-là*,” I do not need that hypothesis.<sup>84</sup> Nietzsche does not quite

---

<sup>81</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 12, “The Flies in the Marketplace.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 52-53.

<sup>82</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 1, “The Child with the Mirror.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 87-88.

<sup>83</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 2, “On the Blessed Isles.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 90.

<sup>84</sup> Pierre-Simon Laplace (b. 1749), French mathematician and astronomer.



mean it in the same sense. It is a conjecture; it cannot have full human meaning. He will develop this in the sequel a little bit later, “God is a conjecture.”

**Reader:** “God is a conjecture . . . your own discernment shall ye follow out to the end!”<sup>85</sup>

**LS:** Senses, and senses in the widest sense there.

**Reader:** “And what ye have called . . . And how would ye endure life without that hope, ye discerning ones?”

**LS:** Ye knowing ones, knowing. Zarathustra addresses people who know, and he himself is a knower. That is very important; we must [inaudible].

**Reader:** “Ye knowers. Neither in the inconceivable could ye have been born, nor in the irrational.”<sup>86</sup>

**LS:** Let us wait a moment. Now, what is meant here by these strange assertions? Everything that is, the world, should be radically incorporated into man—humanized. This incorporation into man: that is the meaning of knowledge. But this obviously goes [inaudible] one can say that all scientific understanding of the world is in a way a transformation of the world into something human. But here much more is meant: precisely the things which do not enter science are to be incorporated into men. There is nothing in itself inaccessible to men. The world as men knew it and know it is and always was a human creation. There is no “beyond” that humanly created world, no “without” it. But what man hitherto did *unconsciously* will now be done, *must* now be done, consciously. Let us read on here.

**Reader:** “But that I may reveal my heart . . . now, however, doth it draw me.”

**LS:** The conclusion draws me, yes. Now this is an extreme of blasphemy, one can rightly say. What Nietzsche does is not merely to doubt God’s existence theoretically, but to revolt against *any* possible God. And why that? This has a prehistory, and I mention only one point. The primary view was, as indicated here by Nietzsche in the camel, that piety or reverence consists in doing what the gods tell men to do—the gods or *the* God. And then there is a profound change that takes place in some individuals, in which piety then means doing what the gods *do*, and that was traditionally called “assimilation” to gods or God, imitation of God. That’s the starting point for Nietzsche. An imitation of God is incompatible with creativity, because imitation cannot be creativity. And therefore he goes on to say, in the next paragraph . . .

**Reader:** “God is a conjecture . . . and all the perishable would be but a lie?”<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 2, “On the Blessed Isles.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 90-91.

<sup>86</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 2, “On the Blessed Isles.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 91.

<sup>87</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 2, “On the Blessed Isles.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 91.

**LS:** In other words, the belief in gods or God means the belief in beings transcending time, transcending perishability, and therefore also human creativity. There cannot be anything transcending time and, if we use this word again, there cannot be anything transcending history. Next.

**Reader:** “To think this is giddiness . . . the poets lie too much.—”<sup>88</sup>

**LS:** This is an allusion to the end of Goethe’s *Faust*; but go on.

**Reader:** “But of time and of becoming . . . suffering itself is needed, and much transformation.”<sup>89</sup>

**LS:** Much change. Transformation, temporal process. We will stop at this point. That is the ground of Nietzsche’s concern with history, perhaps the deepest ground: the denial of anything imperishable, of anything unchangeable; one can almost say of anything eternal. The strange thing is that Nietzsche *ends* with the assertion of something eternal, which he calls the eternal return; we will see that next time. I think we leave it at that today.

[end of session]

---

<sup>1</sup> Changed from “breaks.”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “That is a point which later.”

---

<sup>88</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 2, “On the Blessed Isles.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 91.

<sup>89</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 2, “On the Blessed Isles.” *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 92.

### Session 3: no date

**Leo Strauss:** Let us continue with our discussion. On the basis of “The Three Metamorphoses of the Mind,” “The Thousand and One Goal,” and the Prologue, we reached roughly the following understanding. The first stage of the mind is that of the camel, which takes upon itself the heaviest burden. This corresponds to the national, particular, tables of values. The second stage is that of the lion: the free individual, the revolutionary. And finally, the child, the creative individual; and that probably corresponds to *the* superman and therefore to the goal of mankind. Neither the Christian nor the socialist goals are, according to Zarathustra, genuine goals. Their ultimate consequence is the last man. This would be the inevitable fate of mankind if there is not an awakening while there is still time. Man stands now at the crossroads between his ultimate degradation, the last man, and this highest being or self-overcoming, the superman.

The camel seeks the heaviest burden. This concern with the heavy, with heaviness, can be understood as the spirit of heaviness or gravity of which Zarathustra speaks later on in the book. At the highest stage, the spirit of heaviness is overcome: there is no support for the values, either by God, or by nature, or by other human beings—say, the herd. There is no support except the creative act itself. We must make one important correction regarding the lion, the second stage, which I call the “revolutionary”; and for this purpose we have to look at the speech called “Of the Tarantula.”

**Reader:** “Behold, this is the hole of the tarantula. Do you want to see the tarantula itself? . . . For *that man be delivered from revenge*—”<sup>i</sup>

**LS:** Redeemed.

**Reader:** “redeemed from revenge . . . a rainbow after long storms.”

**LS:** Now let us skip, say, about ten paragraphs, and go on to where he says, “Distrust all those who talk much of their justice.”

**Reader:** “Mistrust all who talk much of their justice! . . . they would be pharisees, if only they had—power.”<sup>ii</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. We cannot read the whole speech, but this is the revolutionary in the ordinary sense: the egalitarian revolutionary who in the name of justice tries to bring the high down. They are animated by the spirit of revenge. Nietzsche does not speak here of the *spirit* of revenge; he will do it later, but Zarathustra’s work as a whole presupposes the overcoming of both the spirit of heaviness and the spirit of revenge. Now we read some specimens of Nietzsche’s critique of traditional morality, and especially the

---

<sup>i</sup> Zarathustra, 2. 7, “On the Tarantulas.” *Portable Nietzsche*, 211.

<sup>ii</sup> Zarathustra, 2. 7, “On the Tarantulas.” *Portable Nietzsche*, 212.

equation of reason=virtue=happiness=peace of mind. And in addition, as Nietzsche interprets that, =sleep, to which he opposes the highest awakeness, the greatest exposedness. “Reason is virtue” means that there is the same virtue or virtues for all, for reason, universality. Against this, Zarathustra asserts that each individual can have his own unique virtue, which has only the name in common with other men’s virtues. The critique of reason is connected with the critique of consciousness or of the ego, to which he opposes the self. And in order to make quite clear that the self is not anything of what traditional philosophy meant by it, he says the self is the body. Now in accordance with this, he teaches not the elimination of the passions nor merely their control, but their transformation into virtues in the section on “*Freudenschaften und Leidenschaften*,” which we read. We began to read the section, “Of the Blessed Isles.” Perhaps we turn to that now. Zarathustra reveals the root of his atheism in the sentence, “If there were gods, how could I stand it not to be a god?” Hence there are no gods. If there were a god or God, man could not reach his highest stature. He could not be the creator. But one must wonder: Did man create himself, the earth, the sun, and so on? Nietzsche says [that] in a sense man *did* do that. Do you have that passage which I read?

**Reader:** “God is a conjecture; but I desire that your conjectures should be limited . . . for your own bliss, you lovers of knowledge.”<sup>iii</sup>

**LS:** What man hitherto did [inaudible] so man created in a sense the world, insofar as he gave meaning to everything. What man hitherto did unconsciously—namely, giving meaning and hence being to the world—he should now do knowingly. Now, man is indeed not a creator out of nothing: his creativity presupposes a *hyle*, a matter; but this matter is to a large extent the product of earlier human creativity. Yet ultimately there is some *prōtē hyle*, some ultimate matter which is in no way man’s creation. But this first matter, or last matter, is wholly meaningless, lacking any order, merely chaotic. And every order, every meaning, stems from human creativity. Now let us go on where you were. No, we drop that. “God is a thought which makes everything straight.”

**Reader:** “God is a thought that makes crooked all that is straight . . . all that is impermanent a mere lie?”

**LS:** So, there must not be anything transcending time and perishability. Or as we can also say, there cannot be anything transcending history. Now, let us drop the next paragraph and then go on: “I call it evil and.”

**Reader:** “Evil I call it, and misanthropic . . . and the Permanent.”

**LS:** The unperishable.

**Reader:** “All the unperishable—that is only a parable . . . a justification of all impermanence, all perishable.”<sup>iv</sup>

---

<sup>iii</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 2, “On the Blessed Isles.” *Portable Nietzsche*, 198.

<sup>iv</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 2, “On the Blessed Isles.” *Portable Nietzsche*, 198-99.

**LS:** Yes, all perishability.

**Reader:** “Creation—that is the great redemption . . . suffering is needed and much change.”

**LS:** Nothing eternal and unchangeable, regardless of whether the Christian, the biblical God, or the Platonic ideas, or Kant’s moral law. There is nothing exempt from suffering and death. But do we not reasonably long for redemption from suffering, and from all heaviness? Answer: the true redemption from suffering is creativity. Now let us go on where you left off.

**Reader:** “Indeed, there must be much bitter dying . . . justifiers of all perishing . . . this very destiny—my will wills.”<sup>v</sup>

**LS:** But I would translate here “freedom,” because that’s the true teaching of the freedom of the will. It is not the traditional view, but the view that willing liberates. The root of creativity is the will, willing—not knowledge, which is directed toward what is in itself and independently of the will. That is the notion underlying traditional philosophy as distinguished from Nietzsche’s, as we will see.

Now there is nothing eternal, unchangeable, universal; yet there is *the* goal of mankind, which seems to be universal. The transition from man to superman is surely the most profound change since man has come into being. Is it not also the ultimate change? Think of Marx’s view: The whole of history, what we know of what man has done hitherto, is only prehistory; and only with the jump into that new age will history begin. So the true change, according to Marx, begins after the jump from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom. Yet nevertheless, there is an end to history, according to Marx. Human life will perish at a certain time. I do not know whether Marx himself ever spoke of that; surely Engels did in his essay on Feuerbach.<sup>vi</sup> Must there therefore not be a peak—say, the Communist society at its highest stage of creativity—a peak followed by a decline, perhaps due to entropy? Let us leave this open for the time being. Let us try to understand the meaning of the change advocated or hoped for by Zarathustra.

There is no longer acceptance of values, as if they were given or imposed by God or nature or the historical process, but conscious creation of them. Let us turn to an earlier section, the last speech of the first part, “Of the Gift-Giving Virtue.” Do you have that? Now number 2, let us read a few paragraphs.

**Reader:** “Here Zarathustra fell silent . . . there has ruled so far only nonsense — no sense.”<sup>vii</sup>

---

<sup>v</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 2, “On the Blessed Isles.” *Portable Nietzsche*, 199.

<sup>vi</sup> Friedrich Engels, *Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1888).

<sup>vii</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 22, “On the Gift-Giving Virtue,” 2. *Portable Nietzsche*, 188.

**LS:** Now a little bit later on, four paragraphs in the original, where he says “Unexhausted and undiscovered is man and man’s earth still”: We are still fighting with the giant, chance or accident, implying that what we have to look forward to is *the* overcoming, the final overcoming of chance—a thought which we know to some extent from Machiavelli, when he speaks of Fortuna as a woman who can be controlled by the right kind of man. Man and earth can become exhausted and discovered. Does this mean that the last man can only be indefinitely postponed? Must there not be a final state if there is a peak? Now, in the next subsection of this, number 3, “And this is the great.” Here [in the text].

**Reader:** “And that is the great noon . . . the way to a new morning.”<sup>viii</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here one moment. The great midday of man, that seems to be the peak; but not simply a peak, because this great midday is now, Zarathustra’s now. The evening is the setting of the sun of man, the beginning of the epoch of the superman or even the setting of the superman. Let us read only the last paragraph, again to be reminded of the whole context.

**Reader:** “*Dead are all gods* . . . let this be our last will.”<sup>ix</sup>

**LS:** “Last will.” Is there not a will beyond that? That is always the question of the ultimacy [inaudible]. Is there an ultimate? Is there a peak? This is a question which is connected with the other question of whether Nietzsche can simply reject the universal, as he does when he says each man must only have *his* virtue, which has only the name in common with the virtue of others. [He presents us with] conscious creativity of values and of meaning, as distinguished from the unconscious creativity which is the secret of what man has done in the past. But this conscious creativity has its root or ground in the self as distinguished from consciousness—i.e., it has its root or ground in *unconsciousness* and therefore there cannot be ultimate full clarity. There is a radical tension between knowledge and life: knowledge can never grasp life. Conscious creativity in its highest form is philosophy, but it is a certain kind of philosophy, what he called the “philosophy of the future,” of which he speaks in the subtitle of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Traditional philosophy, all philosophy up to Nietzsche, is not conscious creativity; it is not creative but beholding or contemplative. This is of course of special importance to us as actual or potential men of science, and we should at least consider a few statements about that. The first is “Of Immaculate Knowledge.” That is later on in the Second Part. Let us read the beginning of this section.

**Reader:** “On Immaculate Perception. When the moon rose yesterday . . . the whole body cold and ashen, but with drunken moon eyes.”<sup>x</sup>

**LS:** That is sufficient. So in other words, contemplation is likened to the moon as distinguished from the sun. And moon is to sun just as traditional philosophy is to the

<sup>viii</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 22, “On the Gift-Giving Virtue,” 3. *Portable Nietzsche*, 190.

<sup>ix</sup> *Zarathustra*, I. 22, “On the Gift-Giving Virtue,” 3. *Portable Nietzsche*, 191.

<sup>x</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 15, “On Immaculate Perception.” *Portable Nietzsche*, 233-34.

philosophy of the future. The sun is the origin and the condition of all growth, of all creativity. Now let us turn to another section before that, “Of the Famous Sages,” about thirty pages before.

**Reader:** “On the Famous Wise Men,” in Kaufmann’s words. “You have served the people . . . all you famous wise men—”<sup>xi</sup>

**LS:** “*All*,” all. In other words, that is again *the* difference between Zarathustra and the earlier thinkers.

**Reader:** “and *not* truth . . . stiff-necked and clever like asses.”

**LS:** Now, the ass, the donkey, plays a great role in Nietzsche’s symbolism. One reason: he is famous for his long ears [inaudible] hear more—and for his sound. Now this sound is heard differently by different nations, and the Germans hear it as “ee-ah,” which is almost the same as “*ja*,” “yes.” So the yes-sayer is the donkey. And they, the famous sages, are similar to the donkey because they say yes to what the people say. He compares a different kind of seeker, the true seeker, to the wolf as distinguished from the domesticated dogs. This is an old distinction. Do you know where it occurs, in a very well known context? In Plato’s *Sophist*; the philosopher is compared to the dog, and the sophist to the wolf<sup>xii</sup>. And Nietzsche accepts that, that he is truly in disagreement with the people whereas the philosophers are in agreement with ordinary common sense, with what the people think, what the *people* think. More generally stated, philosophy in the traditional sense starts from what is accessible to *all*, i.e. from what the *people* admit. Let us read some more.

**Reader:** “And many who were powerful . . . throw off the lion’s skin completely.”<sup>xiii</sup>

**LS:** In other words, they pretend to be lions; they pretend to be men who break with the popular views. But that is merely a pretense. They have a pretension to intellectual freedom, to universal doubt or radical doubt; but that is a mere pretense, according to Nietzsche. Now, one more passage here in the same speech, say, about twelve paragraphs later: “But people you remain to me, even in your virtues.”

**Reader:** Bottom of the top paragraph, page 216. “But even in your virtues . . . Did you know that?”

**LS:** So *Geist*, spirit, has nothing to do with good-naturedness, trust, [but] rather with distrust, as Nietzsche says elsewhere. The implication of all this is that philosophy is creativity, and hence not merely understanding of what is independently of the will, as was the pre-Nietzschean view of philosophy. Yet (and here is another difficulty), as conscious creativity, the philosophy of the future presupposes knowledge in the ordinary

---

<sup>xi</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 8, “On the Famous Wise Men.” *Portable Nietzsche*, 214.

<sup>xii</sup> *Sophist* 231a.

<sup>xiii</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 8, “On the Famous Wise Men.” *Portable Nietzsche*, 215.

sense of knowledge or of science. Zarathustra has therefore also a speech towards the end of the work, "Of Science." This belongs to a larger context which begins with the section, "Of the Higher Man." Perhaps we should read that first. The man of science is one of the higher men, but very far from the superman which Zarathustra is divining.

**Reader:** "The first time I came to men . . . and I myself was almost a corpse."

**LS:** That is described in the Prologue, part of which we have read.

**Reader:** "But with the new morning a new truth . . . go away from the market place!"

**LS:** Now, the word which he translates by "mob" is in German *Pöbel*, and I would translate it as vulgar. "Mob" has other implications. So there are higher men, men denied by the egalitarian society of Nietzsche's time, and the man of science belongs to them. But before we turn to that section, we have to consider some other passages. Somewhat later, there is a section called "The Song of Melancholy," which we cannot [inaudible]. This is another kind of the higher man; and here this is not said by the man of science but sung by the old charmer. Now, let us read the second section [of "The Song of Melancholy"].

**Reader:** "But Zarathustra had scarcely left . . . in vain do I wrestle with this evil spirit."<sup>xiv</sup>

**LS:** Now the old magician could be said to be Richard Wagner, but it goes beyond this individual. He is surely the opposite of the man of science, because the man of science is not a magician, doesn't claim to be one. We read only a few lines from the song in which the old magician ridicules Zarathustra, and these are the following lines: "The wooer of truth."

**Reader:** "'Suitor of truth?' they mocked me; 'you? No! Only poet!'"

**LS:** Let us stop here; and at the end of this song.

**Reader:** "Thus I myself once sank . . . *Only fool! Only poet!*"<sup>xv</sup>

**LS:** This is an inevitable consequence of the fact that the philosopher of the future is a creator, and this brings him together with the poet. Can he still be a suitor or wooer of truth, if he is a creator? This is surely the radical difference between him and the man of science. Now let us turn to that section which follows immediately, "Of Science."

**Reader:** "Thus sang the magician . . . after good songs one should long keep still."<sup>xvi</sup>

---

<sup>xiv</sup> *Zarathustra*, 4. 14, "The Song of Melancholy," 2. *Portable Nietzsche*, 408.

<sup>xv</sup> *Zarathustra*, 4. 14, "The Song of Melancholy," 3. *Portable Nietzsche*, 410.

<sup>xvi</sup> *Zarathustra*, 4. 15, "On Science." *Portable Nietzsche*, 413.



**LS:** The conscientious man doesn't listen to him. Who is the conscientious man, the conscientious man of the spirit or in the spirit? That is [inaudible] we must turn to an earlier section called "The Leech." We don't have to read the whole; we should read only where he identifies himself, toward the end: "I am the conscientious of the spirit."

**Reader:** "I am the conscientious in spirit . . . learned it, Zarathustra himself."<sup>xvii</sup>

**LS:** In other words, Zarathustra includes in himself also the conscientious of the spirit as much as the old magician does, and therefore he is distinguished from all of them. Now, who is this conscientious of the spirit, the man of science? What is his creed? Go on in the same passage in "The Leech."

**Reader:** "Rather know nothing . . . I go to the ground—"

**LS:** He is thorough: *gründlich*.

**Reader:** "what does it matter whether it be great or small?"

**LS:** The ground.

**Reader:** "whether it be called swamp . . . In the conscience of science there is nothing great and nothing small."

**LS:** This word which he translates "conscience of science" is in German *Wissengewissenshaft*. The words for knowledge and conscience are in German very close etymologically: *Wissenschaft* is science; *Gewissenshaft*—which doesn't exist, but which was coined for the purpose—would be a derivative from [the word] conscience. So the life of the man of science is accompanied by a very strict conscience, a most extreme honesty or probity. Now, let us hear what kind of a man he is from the sequel.

**Reader:** "Then perhaps you are the man . . . the leech to its ultimate grounds, my conscientious friend?"

**LS:** No, no, "friend" is preposterous: you man of conscience.

**Reader:** "O Zarathustra," replied the man . . . my pride speaks up, for I have no equal here."

**LS:** In this field.

**Reader:** "That is why I said . . . still flowed down the bare arm of the conscientious man . . ."

**LS:** Well, something happened to him before, which we have not read.

---

<sup>xvii</sup> *Zarathustra*, 4. 4, "The Leech." *Portable Nietzsche*, 362.

**Reader:** “ten leeches having bitten . . . calls me away from you.’ Thus spoke Zarathustra.”<sup>xviii</sup>

**LS:** Now, let us return to the section “Of Science,” since we have understood what the conscientious man, the conscientious mind, the conscientious spirit, is: the most severe scientist, a man of the most strict specialization. He is at the opposite pole not only of the people, but also of everything journalistic, everything human—and especially of the old magician, the successful first-class swindler, because the conscientious’ man’s concern, his *soul*, is probity. Now let us read—we have read the beginning—when the answer of the conscientious man comes.

**Reader:** “‘You praise me . . . more *security*, that is why I came to Zarathustra.’”

**LS:** You can also translate it as certainty.

**Reader:** “‘For he is the firmest tower . . . today, it seems to me, this is called *science*.’”<sup>xix</sup>

**LS:** The root of science is a desire for certainty, for security. On the most obvious level, science is for the sake of power, for the overcoming of nature, for security. So what is here called the concern with certainty is the same as the spirit of gravity, of heaviness; every assertion supported by one hundred percent reliable evidence; no daring, no exposedness. And yet this science, this knowledge, is an indispensable ingredient of the creativity of Zarathustra. How this can be understood, we must see later.

Genuine concern with knowledge is traditionally concern[ed] with universal knowledge; that must remain somehow, but it can no longer be understood as certain knowledge, as demonstrable knowledge, as knowledge of what is true in itself. But as related to *the* goal of mankind, must it not be final? Is it not at least an anticipation of *the* peak, and is not the peak the end of all change—whereas Zarathustra opposes everything unchangeable, as we have seen? The end of all change would not necessarily be the end of all life: we remember the Aristotelian notion of change, of *kinēsis*, in contradistinction to *energeia*, to being-at-work. The acquisition of knowledge, for example, is a change from ignorance to knowledge. But once we have acquired that knowledge, we do no longer change. And yet we live, and we live much more than while we acquired the knowledge. That is what Aristotle understands by actuality, *energeia*. Could this not be, something like this, what Nietzsche has in mind? The final knowledge would have to be redemption from suffering, but not through the flight into the eternal and unchangeable. It would have to be redemption from revenge, and it is the spirit of revenge which posits the eternal and unchangeable. Therefore let us read one more speech of Zarathustra; it is much earlier, “Of Redemption.” We will read a few sections from this important speech.

**Reader:** “When Zarathustra crossed over . . . and a hunchback spoke to him thus.”

---

<sup>xviii</sup> Zarathustra, 4. 4, “The Leech.” *Portable Nietzsche*, 362-63.

<sup>xix</sup> Zarathustra, 4. 15, “On Science.” *Portable Nietzsche*, 413-14.

**LS:** We don't need that. The symbolism is, I believe, clear: the great bridge—between man and superman—and so on. And now we continue about two pages later: "After Zarathustra had thus spoken to the hunchback."

**Reader:** "When Zarathustra had spoken . . . also a seer of that which must come."

**LS:** Here he says this "*must*" come.

**Reader:** "A seer, a willer, a creator . . . Is he a poet? or truthful?"

**LS:** "*or* truthful." They are mutually exclusive, as we have seen.

**Reader:** "A liberator? . . . guesser of riddles and redeemer of accidents?"

**LS:** So redeeming means overcoming man's fragmentariness. Man has always been fragments, even the highest man, and this fragmentariness is to be overcome. And this is identical with the overcoming of chance: this is *the* peak. And how does he go on?

**Reader:** "To redeem those . . . the will's ill will against time and its 'it was.'"<sup>xx</sup>

**LS:** Therefore, any thought of the super-temporal, [the] eternal, is rooted in the spirit of revenge, a revenge against the absolute limit of the will—namely, the past. The past can no longer be changed by man or God, so the redemption is not merely the redemption from the fragmentariness of man, but it is a redemption from man's past—from this whole fragmentary mankind—in the sense of the willing of man's past, the willing of that which cannot be willed, the willing of the irrevocable. Or is it possible to will the past? Can one not will that the past return, and can one not will even that the past return eternally? This is the famous thought of eternal return as Nietzsche understands it, and as it is stated in the *Zarathustra* in the speeches "Of Vision and Enigma" and "The Convalescent," which we cannot now read. Now this has to do with a question on which we have touched before: the peak is followed by a decline, and the decline is followed again by a new beginning. Peak, decline. According to the view which we now learn from science, there was a beginning—billions of years ago, although that is not fundamentally different from yesterday—and there is an end and an entropy billions of years in the future, but again, tomorrow. There is no thought possible about what was before this beginning, this atom, or whatever it was, beyond which the scientists cannot go. There is nothing beyond the entropy at the end. Nietzsche questions this whole thing: the world has been infinitely often and will be infinitely often. This is an old thought of all those Greek philosophers who did not believe that the visible universe is eternal (as Aristotle thought, for whom no question arises); those—like the Epicureans, for example—who said that the visible world has come into being *had* to assert that it has come into being infinitely often and will come into being infinitely often. But the meaning of this doctrine is very different in Nietzsche himself.

---

<sup>xx</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 20, "On Redemption." *Portable Nietzsche*, 249-51.

Man's creativity presupposes things which are not created by man. Man's very creativity is not created by man: it presupposes, as we say, nature. But how is this compatible with the claim raised on behalf of human creativity, the human will to power? Is it so that Nietzsche can understand nature only as willed, as a human postulate? Is it so that Nietzsche *needs* nature and yet cannot recognize it as nature? This is the question. Now, we hope to reach a better understanding of this fundamental difficulty by our study of *Beyond Good and Evil* and the *Genealogy of Morals*, to which we turn now. Only a few words about these two books.

*Beyond Good and Evil* was conceived as a kind of commentary on the *Zarathustra*. Nietzsche knew that the *Zarathustra* was in a way unintelligible. Individual sentences, individual speeches could be understood, but not the whole. That would take a very, very long time; and therefore he needed preparatory writings. *Beyond Good and Evil* was meant to be one of them. In other words, it was meant to be on a lower level than the *Zarathustra*. It was meant to be critical of contemporary and traditional thought rather than positive or constructive. And the *Genealogy of Morals* is even lower in this sense—an introduction to an introduction. So our serious study of Nietzsche can only begin now, because what we did hitherto was only to get an inkling of that explosion that was Nietzsche.

We should read something which I have not assigned to anyone for a paper; namely, the Preface to the *Zarathustra*. But is there anyone who has a question or objection which we should discuss now, before we turn to that?

**Student:** I have a question about the three metamorphoses. You implied on a number of occasions that there was no necessity for the appearance of the superman, but on the contrary it is perfectly possible that the last man would [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, that is the most striking difference between Nietzsche and Marx: that Nietzsche cannot predict as Marx can predict. It depends on what man will do now, what future will come.

**Student:** While one would have to rule out a strict historical necessity with regard to the three stages, there does seem to be a kind of temporality which is involved in their appearance. In other words, the second presupposes the first and the third presupposes the second, in a way. I was wondering if you might make that a little more clear.

**LS:** When he speaks of the three metamorphoses, he does not strictly speak of necessity. He states as a fact that these are the three metamorphoses, and if one were to ask him with what right he can say that, he would say "I know from my own experience that there is a stage of reverence—the camel; there is a stage of the revolution, liberation—the lion; and there is a final stage of creativity—the child."

**Student:** But does the existence or the possibility of that final stage depend decisively on the fact of its coming after?

**LS:** Yes, this is clear; it could not have come first. That doesn't mean that it would necessarily come. Men could go on with this process of degradation, degeneration, or whatever you call it, to the last man. That's possible; that depends on each individual, on which way he will choose. The only point [that Nietzsche makes is that]<sup>1</sup> it is still open. There could be a time when such a choice is no longer possible.

**Student:** Could one say that without some insight which Nietzsche got from Christianity, the superman would be impossible?

**LS:** That is a long question, to what extent Nietzsche's thought is a secularized Christian thought. That's what you meant? That we cannot answer. What Nietzsche says about it [inaudible] he says both: that he is an heir to Christianity and also that he is not an heir; we cannot answer this question now.

**Student:** In the part that we read on redemption, Nietzsche talks of himself as a seer of the future that must come; then he talks about creating and willing the future that must come. [The rest of the comment is inaudible, but to the effect that there is a contradiction.]

**LS:** This is a very great difficulty: namely, if the doctrine of the eternal return is taken as a theoretical, cosmological, physiological assertion, then of course it must come. Is this clear? If there are these cosmic cycles, say, in billions of years, then it must come. And it must be a repetition, an eternal return. So there was a superman period, if I may say so, in the earlier cycles and it will come now in the future again. But that is a very great difficulty to which no one has an answer; it seems to be a difficulty which Nietzsche could not solve. Is the future dependent on our will—and then of course there is no certainty as to what the will will be—or does the eternal return mean that it is [not dependent on that will]? That is in a way the difficulty of Nietzsche as a whole. In different terms—perhaps in more familiar terms—is that whole within which Nietzsche understands everything *history*, with its peculiar freedom, creative acts? Or is it nature? That is the great difficulty which we will encounter in greater detail when we go through *Beyond Good and Evil*.

**Student:** Why is now the critical time in which man must make the decision between the highest and the lowest, in a way the peak?

**LS:** Here is where knowledge comes in. Nietzsche looks around; he compares, say, 1870 or 1880 with Europe in the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth century and he observes, he believes to observe a manifest decline going together with ever greater literacy, for example—which in one way is a progress, but which means also that there are many more readers and hence very few *good* readers. That's one example among many. We have today other examples, you know, the great problems caused by technology: the tremendous progress of military technology, to take the most obvious one. So the situation of man is more grave, more critical than ever. What could the worst tyrants and conquerors do to men in the past compared to what man can do to himself

now? To that extent I think Nietzsche has been proved right, if sometimes on different grounds than he gave. The situation of man is endangered as it never was before through his progresses; therefore, if there is a danger, we must visualize what the extreme danger is. Nietzsche did not think of extinction. He thought of the utmost degradation: men without any possibility of looking up to something higher, without any aspirations except the low aspirations toward a comfortable, very well-insured life and so on, and so on: the last man.

And on the other hand, if you see the extreme danger and see it as a danger, i.e. not [inaudible] if you have some hope, then you must see also the alternative. And the alternative to that danger is the highest, because a return to something past is impossible. That is axiomatic for Nietzsche, as for every man who believes in history. There is no possibility of a return to something past. We read this passage, “Whispered into the Ear of the Conservatives,” you know? Conservatism doesn’t work, because that only retards and therefore makes the explosion still more dreadful [inaudible].

**Student:** But isn’t this unique view that Nietzsche has, of both the highest and the lowest, a kind of peak in fact?

**LS:** Oh, yes! There is no question about it. There is a certain formal parallelism to Marx on this point, too. In Hegel, the peak followed the actualization of the right order of society, the post-revolutionary state, so that the final thought follows the final historical act. And Marx opposes that, opposes the situation in which the philosopher comes, as he called it, *post festum*, after the festival, the ball, is over. The philosopher must *prepare* the festival rather than merely following and taking notice of it. In this respect, Marx of course followed the traditional view of philosophy—this was a statement of the young Marx, naturally. But Marx’s own doctrine (or whatever we might call it) is the peak in this sense: that this is the final and ultimate understanding of what people call the historical process. There may be corrections in this or that detail, but that the relations of production are the fundamental thing and the other things are [the] superstructure, to take the crucial point: *that* is final. The peak in *thought* is this, but the peak in action would be the communist society; that is understood. Similarly in Nietzsche: his thought is the ultimate thought. His vision of the superman formally corresponds to Marx’s vision of the communist society, only Marx says the communist society will necessarily come and Nietzsche says the superman *may* come.

**Student:** In any event, Nietzsche has come.

**LS:** Yes. I believe this is the same finality as in Marx; but it is much more difficult because for Marx there is no question that there is such a thing as science, be it only science as he understands it, namely dialectical materialism. For Nietzsche the whole possibility of science has become questionable, as we shall see very soon, when we read the first chapter of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

So now let us turn then first to the title and then to the Preface, so that next time [student] can read her paper. The title is *Beyond Good and Evil, Prelude to a Philosophy of the*

*Future*. The indefinite article is important, to “a” philosophy of the future: there is not simply a [inaudible] philosophy of the future. Now, the Preface.

**Reader:** “Supposing that Truth is a woman—”

**LS:** Let us stop here for one moment: No, why not suppose it? That is a view which Nietzsche has stated more than once. I will here point out only one, negative implication: truth is a woman, truth is not God; no to *deus veritas*. This denial is of crucial importance. Truth is something to be wooed and conquered. That is the implication. Now, begin again.

**Reader:** “Supposing that Truth . . . unskilled and unseemly methods for winning a woman?”<sup>xxi</sup>

**LS:** Well, one might even here say female, because the word is *Frauenzimmer*, which is somewhat lower than “woman.” This reminds one of what he has said about the spirit of gravity, of heaviness which has been characteristic of all philosophers, and perhaps of the German philosophers a bit more than of others. And this would surely not be the way to truth.

**Reader:** “Certainly she has never allowed . . . and tyronism; and probably the time is at hand when it will be once—”

**LS:** Not “probably”: perhaps, which is less dogmatic than the translation.

**Reader:** “perhaps the time is at hand . . . as the dogmatists have hitherto reared . . . .”<sup>xxii</sup>

**LS:** Now, this is of course not a very novel assertion by Nietzsche; that was quite frequent in his time, when the most powerful trend, at least in the Western world, was positivism with its opposition to all dogmatic philosophy. Traditionally, dogmatism was understood in opposition to skepticism, of which we will hear quite a bit in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Now, go on here.

**Reader:** “perhaps some popular superstition . . . very human—all-too-human facts.”

**LS:** This would of course be a justification for Nietzsche’s playing with the thought that truth is a woman, because in German, as well as in many other languages—Greek, Latin, French, and so on—the word for truth is of the feminine gender. Go on.

**Reader:** “The philosophy of the dogmatists . . . than on any actual science hitherto—”

**LS:** Any true science.

---

<sup>xxi</sup> *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Helen Zimmern, in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (Modern Library, 1950), 377.

<sup>xxii</sup> *BGE*, Preface. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 377.

**Reader:** “true science hitherto we owe to it . . . of Pure Spirit and the Good in Itself.”<sup>xxiii</sup>

**LS:** That is crucial. That is *the* alternative to Nietzsche. He doesn’t believe that, say, empiricism or modern rationalist philosophy is in any important way different from the greatest of all earlier philosophers, Plato. And this—Plato’s view that there is a pure mind which perceives *the* truth in itself, the truth which is the good—this is the opposite pole to Nietzsche. We will find quite a few traces of that, and explanations of it, when we go on. But no one believes that anymore; that is [inaudible].

**Student:** How much do you think Nietzsche believes his descriptions of, say, Plato’s views and Socrates’ views, were actually correct; or how much did he realize or feel that he might have been changing them a little bit?

**LS:** We will hear that; that is so important that he will speak about it himself, we don’t have to worry about that. Now, go on.

**Reader:** “But now when it has been surmounted . . . this error has fostered.”

**LS:** In other words, it was an error; but it was an error which was salutary because the fight against it has given man a much greater strength than he ever had before.

**Reader:** “It amounted to the very inversion . . . ecclesiastical oppression of millennia—”

**LS:** No, “the Christian ecclesiastical pressure.” He omitted that?

**Reader:** No, it was coming toward Christianity, “of millennia of Christianity “—for Christianity is Platonism for the ‘people’—”

**LS:** So, in other words, Christianity does not create a new problem. It is fundamentally the same as Platonism: an eternal truth.

**Reader:** “produced in Europe . . . they again made things square —they invented printing.”

**LS:** Inventing gunpowder is idiomatic in German for [a sort of cleverness] [inaudible] *not* inventing gunpowder is like not setting the Thames on fire. So, the Germans invented gunpowder; they were clever.

**Reader:** “But we, who are neither Jesuits . . . . And perhaps also the arrow, the duty—”

**LS:** No, the task.

---

<sup>xxiii</sup> BGE, Preface. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 377-78.



**Reader:** “and, who knows? *the goal to aim at* —”<sup>xxiv</sup>

**LS:** “The goal,” yes. You remember the reference to the goal in “One Thousand and One Goal,” in the *Zarathustra*. Now here he speaks of two dangers to the modern mind, one caused by Jesuitism and the other caused by democratic enlightenment. And who was *the* opponent of Jesuitism?

**Student:** Pascal?

**LS:** Pascal. So Nietzsche, as it were, takes up again what Pascal had tried to do in the seventeenth century. And here, although it is not explicitly said, what we have read in the *Zarathustra* is clearly implied: if there is no such countermovement, then the last man would come. That is, I think, easy to understand.

There is one expression which is perhaps particularly dark: he spoke of<sup>2</sup> perspective<sup>3</sup> as the ground condition of all life. All thought—all life, and hence all thought—is perspectival, i.e. a view of things in a specific perspective. That is the opposite to Platonism, in which there is a pure mind which perceives *the* truth; or if one wants to speak in terms of perspective, there is only *one* perspective, and not a variety of perspectives. This is the theme, in the first place, of the first chapter of *Beyond Good and Evil*: the variety of perspectives and the problem caused by it. We can therefore also say the problem of history. Next time, we will try to understand that.

[end of session]

---

<sup>1</sup> Changed from “which Nietzsche says.”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “the.”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “not of the perspective.”

#### Session 4: no date

**Leo Strauss:** <sup>i</sup>May I ask you to repeat what you said toward the end of your paper by answering this question: Nietzsche speaks frequently of *all* philosophers, of the prejudices which they all had. Now, what is that prejudice, the fundamental prejudice which they all had? Repeat that. You have said it, but we must [inaudible].

**Student:** I believe the fundamental prejudice is the belief that there are good and bad things, that there is such a distinction.

**LS:** But still, that is not the first and most general [statement]<sup>1</sup> which could be applied to all philosophers.

**Student:** That there is knowledge.

**LS:** Truth. So, that they have discovered, *discovered*, *the* truth. And what is Nietzsche's counter-assertion?

**Student:** That in fact, by some rather mysterious forces, they have, as he says, "invented" this truth, or they have ordered things themselves.

**LS:** They have imposed their will on the things. Far from being theoretical, contemplative, discoverers, or whatever it may be, they are rather creative, or inventors, imposers of their will. That is the key point. And therefore philosophy, in the earlier sense of the word, is impossible. And what is to take its place?

**Student:** Psychology.

**LS:** Psychology. But what does this psychology do? Is psychology not a science?

**Student:** That is quite a problem.

**LS:** Yes.

**Student:** I'm really not sure; because psychology is to, in a sense, investigate the creation, or the sources of creation. But if everything is created, then psychology could not be understood as a science simply.

**LS:** Well, what would it be then? Say, a poetic utterance, which would differ considerably, probably, between the different poets? Would this be it?

**Student:** Perhaps.

---

<sup>i</sup> Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

**LS:** That is a great difficulty, surely; we will come to that. There is one point which I would like to [inaudible] what did you say when you tried to explain the meaning of number 2? This I didn't quite follow. What was it the philosophers traditionally said? They said there is such a thing as the will to truth, and this will to truth has nothing in common with any other desire, and especially not with any will to appearance or deception. What does he say about that? This did not become clear to me from your paper.

**Student:** Well, I believe he says that [inaudible] in section 2, he first lays groundwork for asking whether there is in fact a truth, that [inaudible].

**LS:** Well, does he not start with this very simple thought, that this traditional view is based on the fact that there is an opposition or dualism of values; and then he questioned that, so that the will to truth may very well be ultimately of the same root as the will to untruth.

**Student:** Yes . . . [inaudible].

**LS:** Good. We leave it at that for the time being.

**LS:** Perhaps we begin our discussion as follows. When Nietzsche speaks of the philosophers here in this first chapter entitled "Of the Prejudices of the Philosophers," he uses the word synonymously in many cases with metaphysicians, as you doubtless observed. And it is to a considerable extent just a criticism of metaphysicians, as he indicated in the Preface: you remember the passage regarding Plato. And one could say that—quite a few people would say today [that], well, to that extent Nietzsche is simply uninteresting, because we all know [inaudible] no one, except a few reactionaries, believes in metaphysics, and metaphysics has been replaced by science. That was stated before Nietzsche by Auguste Comte<sup>ii</sup> and surely by many people since. In addition Nietzsche cannot claim what Comte could to some extent, that he is a scientist. Also science: even if Nietzsche had been at the highest level of the understanding of science which was available in his time, science has undergone very radical transformations since Nietzsche's time. And therefore, why do we bother about this whole thing?

We limit ourselves to our part or region of science called social science, which, as everyone knows, is based ultimately on psychology. And here we are somehow reminded of Nietzsche, because this psychology has become (partly, at least) depth psychology. This depth psychology in turn is indebted very much to Nietzsche. The concept of sublimation, for example, stems from Nietzsche, so in spite of the incompetence of Nietzsche, he affects science, at least the human sciences. Furthermore, science—social science—has become since Nietzsche's time value-free, which means science cannot

---

<sup>ii</sup> See Comte's *Course on Positive Philosophy*, 6 vols. (1830-1842). Comte's law of the three stages posits that the human mind has passed through three historical stages: theological, metaphysical, positive.

settle any value questions and it cannot even answer the question of Why science? Again we see how Nietzsche affects us because he more than anyone else made this Why science? the question. So we cannot under any circumstances disregard him by believing we are sitting on the high horse of late twentieth century science. Now the old answer to that question, Why science? was this (the old answer, say, up to the eighteenth century): philosophy is science; science and philosophy are the same, and their end is the truth. This is the answer which Nietzsche attacks. Scientific understanding—especially that which emerged in the time of Galileo and reached its first perfection in Newton—scientific understanding is *the* perfection of our ordinary, prescientific, natural understanding, for man is that animal endowed with understanding. But the question arises: Is not science rather a profound modification of prescientific understanding, rather than its perfection? A modification recommended first by its practical uses: “science for the sake of power,” as it was called originally. Yet this raises immediately the question: Is this enormous increase of man’s power owed to science good? When we think of medicine we would say yes; when we think of hardware we probably would become doubtful. Similar difficulties and profounder difficulties, even, arise regarding its theoretical superiority. Science claims in principle to lead to an adequate understanding of everything, otherwise it wouldn’t make sense. And yet this same science presents itself as infinitely progressive, i.e. at no stage in its progresses will it not be confronted with problems it has not yet solved. So although this science is in principle able to solve all problems, in fact the mysteries will always remain; they will change, but they will always remain mysteries. Furthermore, the fundamental science is physics, at least as science of reality, dealing with the inanimate. Can the animate be reduced to the inanimate, or is there here a jump? Can man be reduced to the subhuman, or is there again a jump? These questions are as controversial as they have always been. More generally, does modern science not rest on a fundamental hypothesis which will always remain a hypothesis? I read to you a few sentences from the history of modern physics by Einstein and Infeld, *The Evolution of Physics*: “Very often a seemingly perfect theory has proved inadequate in the light of further reading. New facts appear, contradicting the theory or unexplained by it. The more we read, the more fully do we appreciate the perfect construction of the book, even though a complete solution seems to recede as we advance.”<sup>iii</sup>

Now what is the book of which they speak?

**Student:** Nature.

**LS:** The book of nature, yes. The more we read, the more fully we appreciate the perfect construction of the book of nature. Therefore the attempt to read it, to understand it, is perfectly reasonable: it was perfectly constructed. There is another passage, however, at the end, in a brief section entitled “Physics and Reality,” after he has given a survey of the development of physics from Galileo up to quantum mechanics. Here they say:

---

<sup>iii</sup> A. Einstein and L. Infeld, *The Evolution of Physics: The Growth of Ideas from the Early Concepts to Relativity and Quanta* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 4.

Science is not just a collection of laws, a catalogue of unrelated facts; it is a creation of the human mind, with its freely invented ideas and concepts. Physical theories try to form a picture of reality and to establish its connection with the wide world of sense impressions. Thus the only justification for our mental structures is, whether and in what way our theories form such a link.

We have seen new realities *created* by the advance of physics. But this chain of creation can be traced back far beyond the starting point of physics. [LS: meaning modern physics] One of the most primitive concepts is that of an object. The concepts of a tree, a horse, any material body, are creations gained on the basis of experience, though the impressions from which they arise are primitive in comparison with the world of physical phenomena. A cat teasing a mouse also creates by thought its own primitive reality. The fact that the cat reacts in a similar way toward *any* mouse it meets shows that it forms concepts and theories which are its guide through its own world of sense impressions.

“Three trees” is something different from “two trees”; again “two trees” something different from “two stones.” The concept of the pure numbers 2, 3, 4 . . . [LS: and so on], freed from the objects from which they arose, are creations of the thinking mind which describe the reality of our world.<sup>iv</sup>

So we want to read the book of nature. We want to describe the reality of the world. And yet this presupposes free creations. Is there not a certain tension between “describing” and “creations”? Or more fundamentally: How do Einstein and Infeld know that the book of nature is perfectly constructed? Without this assumption, the whole enterprise is based on a fundamental hypothesis which can never become more than a fundamental hypothesis. Is the book of nature not a human creation—meaning the very concept of the book of nature as perfectly constructed: Is this not itself an invention? There are other forms of “human creativity” (I’m speaking the language which is now so familiar)—morality, art, religion. How are they related to science? The mere necessity of raising this question shows that a theory of science, and only of science [unrelated to other kinds of creation], is impossible; because, as I said, there are other kinds of creation, of human creation.

Nietzsche therefore opens the way to a more adequate understanding by raising the question of *Why* science? What is the relation of science to life, to human life? And he rules out from the very beginning the possibility that one can say, Well, we need science in order to live, because men have lived millennia without modern science. What is the fundamental character of *human* life, that it *may* develop science in the sense of modern science but does not necessarily do it? What is the fundamental character of life? What is the fundamental character of *all* beings? This means he raises the metaphysical question.

---

<sup>iv</sup> *Evolution of Physics*, 310-11. Italics added by transcriber to indicate LS’s emphasis.

And he does it not because [inaudible] in this he does not relapse behind the high level of scientific thought, but he raises a question which science leaves completely untouched. And he answers that question of what is the fundamental character of all life, of all being, I think in the *Zarathustra*, in the section called “On Self-Overcoming,” page 226. Well, I’ll read it. That is, I believe, simpler: “Hear, then, my word, you who are wisest . . . I found the will to be master.” And a few paragraphs later, on page 227: “And life itself confided this secret to me: ‘Behold,’ it said, I am that which must always overcome itself.”<sup>v</sup>

That is an authentic interpretation of what will to power means: “overcome itself.” But I put the emphasis in this crucial sentence now in the following way: “Where I *found* the living, there I *found* will to power.” This is not an invention, but a discovery. So Nietzsche has a metaphysics, and he rejects all metaphysics. How can we explain this? I will give a survey of the possibilities before we turn to a discussion of the passages. The first is a simple one: that Nietzsche tried to overcome dogmatism, but he relapsed into it, namely into a metaphysical, theoretical assertion. Yet he also says in a very clear passage, toward the end of the first chapter, when he speaks of the will to power, at the end of the 22nd paragraph of *Beyond Good and Evil*: “Yet granted.”

**Reader:** “Granted that this also is only interpretation—”

**LS:** Namely, that the essence of all being is will to power.

**Reader:** “and you will be eager enough to make this objection? —well, so much the better.”<sup>vi</sup>

**LS:** Yes; that is very strange, isn’t it? It is better that it be hypothesis than that it be a demonstrated, proven assertion. The will to power is a hypothesis, one interpretation among many—an experiment, as Nietzsche also says. This therefore speaks against the hypothesis that it was a mere relapse into dogmatic metaphysics.

An alternative interpretation is this: the doctrine is not meant to be true in itself, but a creation of Nietzsche, which may become true if men act on it. With a German pun, *der Versuch* (experiment) is *eine Versuchung* (a temptation). And if men are sufficiently tempted by it, then it will become a reality. This again is questionable, this interpretation, because Nietzsche teaches that the will to power doctrine was *always* true, only men did not know that truth.

A third possibility: the doctrine of the will to power is superior to all earlier metaphysical assertions. It is a metaphysical assertion all right; but it takes into consideration things which the earlier doctrines have not taken into consideration. It is the best possible doctrine *now*. But it cannot be simply true, because we know that it belongs to a certain perspective, the perspective of Nietzsche or of the late nineteenth century; it belongs to

---

<sup>v</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 12, “On Self-Overcoming.” *Portable Nietzsche*, 226, 227.

<sup>vi</sup> *BGE* 22. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 405-6.

Nietzsche or to his age. One can state it perhaps as follows: we know that it cannot be the last word, but we cannot know the reason. Someone, a contemporary of Nietzsche, Dilthey,<sup>vii</sup> has said that owing to the historical sense we know that man is surrounded by his time, by the condition of his time, as by walls. Now that doesn't make sense because once you know that there are certain walls which obstruct your vision, you are already over the walls. Because walls of this kind, you know, don't need ladders or other [inaudible] of this kind. But, we must add, [they are] invisible. Each age, each individual, however great, is limited in his vision, has a specific perspective, but he cannot know this perspective. These are the invisible walls. But then, therefore, there remains this doubt: namely, that it cannot be the last word, but it is the best word now.

There is a final possibility that Nietzsche's doctrine as he understands it belongs indeed to a specific perspective—late nineteenth century, Nietzsche, and quite a few other things—but this perspective is the absolute perspective. In other words, something similar to what Hegel claimed, that he is the son of his time but his time is the absolute time. So these are the possibilities which we must have in mind. Perhaps there are others; I am not aware of them.

Now let us turn to a discussion of that chapter. The title, *Beyond Good and Evil*: as Nietzsche makes clear elsewhere, in the *Genealogy of Morals*, "beyond good and evil" doesn't mean "beyond good and bad." But let us leave it at this title and see what the difference between "good and evil" and "good and bad" means when we come to the *Genealogy of Morals. A Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*: "philosophy of the future," the term was used one or two generations before Nietzsche by Feuerbach, [who was] in a way the teacher of Marx. Now, we have read the Preface last time. Let us read, then, slowly. "The Will to Truth."

**Reader:** "The Will to Truth, which is to tempt . . . What really is this 'Will to Truth' in us?"

**LS:** In *us*.

**Reader:** "In fact we made a long halt at the question as to the origin of this Will—"

**LS:** The *cause* of that will.

**Reader:** "until at last . . . perhaps there is no greater risk."<sup>viii</sup>

**LS:** So philosophy, the quest for truth, is equal to truthfulness. Truthfulness is a moral quality, called by Nietzsche frequently "probity," *Redlichkeit*. It is a questioning of a moral phenomenon; that is indicated by the title of the book. Now this is something to be subjected to analysis for the first time, to causal analysis. And since this is something in us, we know already the name of that causal science which will answer that question:

---

<sup>vii</sup> Wilhelm Dilthey (b. 1833), German philosopher, sociologist, psychologist.

<sup>viii</sup> *BGE* 1. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 381.

psychology. But this psychology will have to be very different from psychology as it existed and as it exists. Yet, Nietzsche contends, there is a still more radical question than the question of the cause of probity: the question of its value. Why is this a more radical question?

**Student:** Don't you raise the question or the possibility of there being no truth, with the second question?

**LS:** No, this is not questioned here; it is presupposed here that there is truth. And the question is only, is it good? But why [inaudible]?

**Student:** Well it's more radical [inaudible] [it is not] the question, What is this ring I've got in my pocket, where did I get it from?—but the stronger question of whether I want to keep it, which is practical and urgent. That is, the first question could conceivably be idle, but the second question could not possibly be idle.

**LS:** Yes; since this first paragraph is succeeded by the second one, and by this peculiar second one, I suggest this answer. In a general way, we know the question of the cause: The cause will be man, the soul of man, but will it be something noble, as has always been assumed, or something base? And that is the subject taken up in the second paragraph. We cannot possibly read the whole; read only the first two sentences.

**Reader:** “*How could* anything originate . . . or the generous deed out of selfishness?”

**LS:** And so on. Later, “The fundamental belief of the metaphysician is the belief.”

**Reader:** “metaphysicians is *the belief in antitheses of values*.”

**LS:** In other words, the high things must have an origin different from that of the low things. All alleged philosophic or metaphysical knowledge is based on a belief, on a faith; and this alone would be fatal to it, not unevident truth. The question is about the value of truth. Value for what? For life, for all life. Does life need truth? Does it not need above all deception, self-deception, egoism, desire? Is the will to truth not perhaps akin to the will to deception, perhaps essentially identical with it? That is what he is here developing. And toward the end of this: “But who is willing to worry about such dangerous ‘Perhapses’!”

**Reader:** “But who wishes to concern . . . such new philosophers beginning to appear.”<sup>ix</sup>

**LS:** So there is a break with all previous philosophy: a new kind of philosophers. But these new philosophers will question philosophy itself, science itself, whereas all previous philosophers have taken that for granted, according to Nietzsche. Yet the new philosophers will still be driven by the will to truth, as we see if we look again at the beginning of the first paragraph.

---

<sup>ix</sup> BGE 2. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 382-83.



**Reader:** “The Will to Truth which is to tempt us . . . hitherto spoken with respect . . . .”

**LS:** And so on. The will to truth will seduce us to quite a few daring acts, many dangerous perhaps; this is still the will to truth. But it is a will to truth which now reflects on itself and questions itself. Now in paragraph 3, conscious thought has its root in the instinctive activity, in physiological postulates for the preservation of man. Man needs, in order to live, a certain regularity, a certain determinedness of the phenomena. Therefore his instincts, through his sense perception, produce or give a form of determinedness, of regularity, which does not belong to the things themselves. So logic, which is based on these fictions—and the same would be true of mathematics—has nothing to do with truth but it is indispensable for man’s living.

He pursues that thought in the sequel, in 4. The falsity of a judgment is no objection to it, for its very falsity may be a condition of life. But here the difficulty becomes apparent: in order to see the falsity of the logical fictions, Nietzsche must know reality as it is; and in the light of it he can see that these things are fiction. But this knowledge, the knowledge of *the* truth, as distinguished from the fictions, must be inimical to human life, since life needs the fictions. It renders questionable the conditions of life. So the questioning of these fundamental fictions is a danger to life. On the other hand, it makes life more risky (the perhapses are dangerous), more exposed, more dangerous, free: hence higher than it ever was. This is the ambiguity.

We cannot possibly read the whole; I note one term which occurs in the center of paragraph 5: fortitude of the conscience. Fortitude of the conscience, which shows itself precisely in the fact that the conscience questions itself, questions probity. So the new kind of philosophers have a higher morality. Beyond good and evil is a higher morality. Paragraph 6: we have read this before, at the beginning; but let us read it again, the beginning.

**Reader:** “It has gradually become clear . . . (and mistaken knowledge!) as an instrument.”<sup>x</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. What moves the philosophers (and Nietzsche thinks only of the great philosophers) is not concern with knowledge, although they believe themselves that. What moves them are urges; in each case perhaps a different urge which wishes to make itself the master of all other urges in the [inaudible]. We have seen one example in the *Zarathustra*: the spirit of revenge is such an urge; there may be others. So, from this it follows—and [student] has given an example of that—that Nietzsche’s psychology, which makes these things clear, consists in an unmasking of the philosophers. They claim to be concerned with the truth and nothing but the truth, but in fact something of which they were wholly unaware has happened to them. There is an example given in paragraph 7: indeed, Plato and Epicurus. That is doubtless true, and Nietzsche himself has of course become the victim of his own unmasking. One could say to some extent it served him

---

<sup>x</sup> BGE 6. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 386.

right. Nevertheless, Nietzsche makes clear in paragraph 8 that this is not the full story by any means.

**Reader:** “There is a point in every philosophy . . . . *Pulcher et fortissimus*.”<sup>xi</sup> There arrives a donkey, fair and very strong.

**LS:** There has arrived a donkey. A donkey has come, an ass; in other words, something that says yes—that is the meaning of that statement—something which has a conviction, a firm faith that cannot question. And the point which Nietzsche makes is this: that every unmasker has *himself* a mask which he doesn’t know is a mask; whereas the present-day scientific psychologies probably do not consider that sufficiently. The difference between Nietzsche and the earlier philosophers is only that he *knows* that his will to truth has a foundation which he, Nietzsche, cannot make conscious. The others did not believe or did not consider the possibility that there was such a donkey in them—unteachable, because unconscious—which guided their thought. Now we come to number 9, which is perhaps particularly important.

**Reader:** “You desire to *live* ‘according . . . at once fruitful and barren and uncertain.’<sup>2</sup> imagine to yourselves . . . in accordance with such indifference.”<sup>xii</sup>

**LS:** That is *the* traditional formula for morality, it is older than the Stoics, but the Stoics are most famous for it: “to live according to nature,” the implication being that vice consists in living against nature. Nietzsche questions this possibility on the basis of an understanding of nature which is not peculiar to Nietzsche by any means: nature does not supply man with any standards because of its radical indifference, its radical barrenness. So surely Nietzsche claims he knows what nature is; otherwise he could not criticize the Stoics. But then he makes a strange distinction in the immediate sequel.

**Reader:** “To live—is not that just endeavoring to be otherwise than this Nature?”

**LS:** “than *this* Nature.” So he makes a distinction between nature understood as described in the preceding sentence, and life. Yes.

**Reader:** “Is not living valuing . . . out of what you yourselves are, and must be?”

**LS:** So in other words, everyone lives according to life.

**Reader:** “In reality, however . . . the will to the *causa prima*.”<sup>xiii</sup>

**LS:** So the older notion (predominant up to the seventeenth century), that the good life is the life according to nature, is based on a wrong notion of nature. That’s the first point.

---

<sup>xi</sup> BGE 8. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 388.

<sup>xii</sup> BGE 9. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 388. Strauss corrects the translation of “fruitful,” suggesting that the German word is not “*fruchtbar*” but “terrible” (*furchtbar*). However, the KSA (5:21) shows that the word is “*fruchtbar*.”

<sup>xiii</sup> BGE 9. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 388-89.

What the Stoics in fact did when they said we should live according to nature was to prescribe *to* nature a specific morality or ideal, i.e. the demands of a specific urge. Now regardless of whether that is presented in the formula “live according to nature” or not, in every philosophy there is such a prescribing to nature, a command as it were, that nature *should* be thus and thus. In itself it is nothing of the kind; it is a mere, barren [inaudible]. To generalize, all philosophy is a kind of the will to power, by which a kind of man tries to put his stamp on pre-given matter; this matter would be nature in this sense. But of course, as we have said more than once, if this is so, first of all the question is: Is not Nietzsche’s doctrine of the will to power *itself* such an attempt to put a stamp on nature, rather than being simply a verity? And second, of course, also: What kind of will to power is philosophy? He says it is the most spiritual will to power. But what is spiritual? We would have to pose this question.

Now let us see. In the following paragraph, Nietzsche speaks of the non-metaphysical thinkers of his age, those who reject metaphysics. But he says that this is again not simply scientific, but also a certain kind of will. For example, he says “there may be puritanical fanatics of conscience, who lie down to die rather on a safe or secure nothing, than on an unsafe or insecure something. But this is nihilism, and a symptom of a despairing, dead-tired soul.”<sup>xiv</sup> So in other words, that is as little scientific and theoretical as Plato’s metaphysics itself. It is a sign, a symptom, of a certain kind of soul.

He turns then in paragraph 11 to Kant and German idealism; he pokes fun at Kant’s famous questions, such as: “How are synthetic judgments a priori possible?” He makes jokes here which ultimately are unfortunately only jokes. He quotes these famous verses from Molière, from *Le Malade imaginaire*; we cannot go into that. I would like to say only one thing. Nietzsche himself had spoken of prescribing one’s ideal to nature. That is a modification of a Kantian phrase, that the understanding prescribes nature its laws; Nietzsche builds here on Kant.

In the next paragraph he speaks again of science, of physics, rejecting atomism—physical atomism—and even more so the atomism of the soul, the traditional view of the simplicity and unity of the soul, which he thinks must be radically questioned. Do you have this, towards the last few sentences, “The new.”

**Reader:** “In that the *new* psychologist . . . to *invent*—and, who knows? perhaps to *discover* the new.”<sup>xv</sup>

**LS:** In German, that is a pun: *erfinden* and *finden*. But the point is here this. The older notions underlying psychology are no longer possible and therefore one must invent something new, the new psychology. And yet this invention would seem to be only in the service of discovery, which is *not* invention. We see that this is part of this seemingly constant fluctuation between the older notion of philosophy, according to which it seeks knowledge of what is in itself, and Nietzsche’s notion, according to which philosophy

---

<sup>xiv</sup> BGE 10. Strauss’s translation.

<sup>xv</sup> BGE 12. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 394.

seems to be creation of something which is not self-subsistent. Then in the next paragraph, he speaks of the will to power and makes it clear that it is understood in opposition to self-preservation. According to the more common view at that time, the cardinal urge of any organic being is the desire or urge toward self-preservation. And Nietzsche questions that: he addresses it to Spinoza and says [that] Spinoza contradicts his anti-teleological intention by speaking of self-preservation, which seems to be teleological. I think that Nietzsche is not correct on this point, because self-preservation is meant in Spinoza universally, not only of living beings but also of the law of inertia, and therefore surely is not teleology. But that is not the most important point. We must read a few more passages which are essential, and therefore I will proceed a bit faster. In number 14, read only the first sentence.

**Reader:** “It is perhaps just dawning on five or six minds that natural philosophy—”

**LS:** No, no: physics.

**Reader:** “physics is only a world-exposition—”<sup>xvi</sup>

**LS:** “that physics *too* is only”—physics too, to say nothing of the metaphysical systems, about which almost everyone agreed with Nietzsche at that time. But physics, physical science, too, is only a world interpretation, i.e. something radically subjective. So Nietzsche’s critique of metaphysics includes a critique of science, and the argument would be that science itself rests on metaphysical foundations, whether it is aware of it or not.

**Student:** Regarding paragraph 13, if someone chose to die rather than suffer disgrace, would this be considered a manifestation of the will to power?

**LS:** Yes, but this could also be understood in the light of self-preservation, if you take a somewhat broader view of self-preservation. The key point is this: what Nietzsche means is that self-preservation is opposed to self-overcoming. Self-preservation means that you are completed, your development is completed and you try to preserve yourself, whereas self-overcoming means you are not finished: you try to change yourself radically, to overcome yourself, as it were.

Perhaps we should raise the following question. He hasn’t given us any reason hitherto why he asserts that the will to power is the essence of reality, but he must have had *some* reasons for that. Now, he had a teacher in a way in his younger period: that was Schopenhauer, who spoke of the will as the essence of reality, of the will as being the will to life. And Nietzsche corrects that as it were by saying that it is not will to life but will to power in the sense of self-overcoming. What is the advantage that Nietzsche’s conception has over the notion of will to life—in a way also Darwin’s notion?

**Student:** [Hope] is the possibility for improvement.

---

<sup>xvi</sup> BGE 14. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 395.

**LS:** Yes, but what are the phenomena which can be explained, or seem to be able to be explained by the will to power in contradistinction to the will to life only?

**Student:** Well, the will to life in general means life in general, all people, all animals, all forms; whereas the will to power is concerned with just certain animals or certain forms, in this case certain superior men.

**LS:** Oh no, it is universal.

**Student:** The will to power, yes; but if there's no order in it, if there's just a contest of wills, then the strongest wills are the wills that will survive.

**LS:** Well, strong is [inaudible] all right; let us leave it at this vague expression, "strong will." Let us leave it at that for the time being. But if self-overcoming is *the* essential character of life, then we would understand, or would seem to understand, evolution. It is not due merely to external change of conditions, but to something which Bergson later on called "creative evolution."<sup>xvii</sup> And we would understand history at the same time: the fact that men—or the right kind of men—desire to overcome the given, the products of earlier creative acts. Without having a notion of a goal, of *the* goal, of their development, they just try to overcome the given—perhaps measuring it by [their]<sup>3</sup> own standards and thus creating a new situation, a new world. Above all we would understand the phenomenon of knowledge: if knowledge means that the understanding prescribes nature its laws, that it forms the given, is this not a kind of the will to power? That would be the question. Now paragraph 17, the first three sentences.

**Reader:** "With regard to the superstitions . . . recognized by these credulous minds—"

**LS:** "Superstitious," he calls them; meaning the logicians.

**Reader:** "namely, that a thought comes . . . the condition of the predicate 'think!'"<sup>xviii</sup>

**LS:** We note here only that there is a falsification of the facts; the true fact is that there is an *id* that is deeper, more fundamental, than the *I*. In paragraph 19 he applies this to the will by giving an analysis of will which shows that the ordinary notion of will, as used especially by Schopenhauer (whom he mentions here), is a mere popular prejudice and not based on a sufficient analysis. Let us read only the last sentence of paragraph 19.

**Reader:** "In all willing . . . social structure composed of many 'souls'—"

**LS:** In quotes.

**Reader:** "on which account . . . phenomenon of 'life' manifests itself."<sup>xix</sup>

---

<sup>xvii</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (1907).

<sup>xviii</sup> *BGE* 17. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 398.

**LS:** Nietzsche's way of looking at things, his substitute for traditional philosophy, is psychology; but as he has made clear in this chapter before, it is not a mere psychology but physio-psychology. We have to add an adjective to that: the human soul is changing through its creative acts, through history; and therefore the fundamental science would be more properly called a "historical" physio-psychology. This new psychology, so different from the traditional [philosophy]<sup>4</sup>—especially from metaphysics—is at the same time something like an ethics, as we see here, because it is impossible to understand these phenomena (this is implied by Nietzsche) without looking at them from a certain point of view. And this point of view is necessarily an evaluating point of view. Very simply and schematically: there is will to power; and if this should be the essence of life, then the question is whether it a strong and healthy will to power or a weak and morbid one. You cannot avoid the question. Or on the ordinary level, when you say that there is no will to power, nothing of this kind but just "adjustment," then you have to look whether that individual you are investigating [is] well adjusted or ill adjusted. You cannot speak about human beings, human things, without making value judgments, either narrow ones from a narrow base, or broader ones.

In paragraph 20, he mentions the point that "interpretation"—a word which he uses all the time (Nietzsche was by training and profession a philologist)—is guided by language. The character of a language in which a man is brought up, which he speaks, determines decisively his thought. Therefore he can reject Locke's doctrine of the origin of ideas as superficial, because Locke traces the ideas to sense data. And Nietzsche asserts against that that on the way from the sense data we surely go through our specific language, and through the interpretations which the language by its grammatical structure suggests. Regarding psychology let us read this last sentence in the last paragraph of this chapter. "Never."

**Reader:** "Never yet did a *profounder* world . . . the path to the fundamental problems."<sup>xx</sup>

**LS:** In other words, Nietzsche asserts that psychology *was* once the queen of the sciences; and to that extent what he proposes is not simply an innovation, although as we have seen it is a new kind of psychology. When was psychology the queen of the sciences? What would one think of?

**Student:** When Plato and Aristotle talked about the soul?

**LS:** Yes, Plato in the first place, I think. Nietzsche knew Plato somewhat better than Aristotle. Well, one could think in the first place of people like Hume, by the way, but I don't believe Nietzsche has Hume in mind, for a variety of reasons. We have to leave it at that.

[end of session]

---

<sup>xix</sup> BGE 19. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 401.

<sup>xx</sup> BGE 23. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 407.

---

<sup>1</sup> Changed from “word.”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “No, not ‘fruitful.’ He read ‘*fruchtbar*.’ It is ‘terrible’ [*furchtbar*]: ‘terrible and barren and uncertain.’”

<sup>3</sup> Changed from “its.”

<sup>4</sup> Changed from “one.”

## Session 5: no date

**Leo Strauss:** [In progress] [Inaudible] —<sup>i</sup>show that you have made an effort to understand the connection between the various seemingly isolated statements; but you did not tell us—at least I was not aware of it—what is the point of this chapter as a whole. In other words, let us assume nothing in Nietzsche but this chapter; suppose someone who hasn't read Nietzsche at all but is reasonably intelligent, would ask you. Could you tell him?

**Student:** I prepared a little card just for that question. I think the chapter can be divided around the 36th paragraph. Prior to that point, Nietzsche shows that there is a kind of conflict between life and wisdom. After that paragraph, and in the paragraph itself, he shows that there are really two ways of partially resolving the conflict; I don't want to say that he resolves it, but he tries.

**LS:** All right; but what is the partial [inaudible]?

**Student:** Well, first of all, there's the free spirit. He's the lion; he goes into the desert and says, "I will." And then there is the philosopher or the child in the metamorphosis, who says, "I am."

**LS:** All right, but put it in language which this imaginary friend of yours would understand, because he wouldn't know anything of the lion and the child.

**Student:** I'm going to have to put it in words which we have already used in class; I think that's the best way to do it.

**LS:** No, think of your friend, who is not a member of this class.

**Student:** The free spirit is one who rejects everything and doesn't posit anything positive. The philosopher presents humanity with a goal, but I don't know what the goal is, frankly, and I don't think Nietzsche says what that goal is.

**LS:** Well, surely not here. But let me then [inaudible] this is somehow correct, what you say about the meaning of chapter 2 and the point which was made; but what particular point struck you particularly, regardless of whether you were particularly attracted or particularly repelled by it? Did you read something here which you have never read before elsewhere and which made you listen?

**Student:** Well, Nietzsche seems to be presenting something—he doesn't seem, he *is* presenting something that has never been said before; he is rejecting [inaudible] no, that isn't true; that's what the free spirit does. Many things struck me, and [inaudible].

---

<sup>i</sup> Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.



**LS:** Well, one could give a very simple answer to the question, and simply look at the heading of this chapter.

**Student:** “On the Free Spirit.”

**LS:** Yes.

**Student:** And tell you what the free spirit is, or what spirit is?

**LS:** Well, he doesn’t say what “spirit” is, but the “free spirit,” which is in German the same as freethinker in English. All right, then the question would be: What was the subject of the first chapter?

**Student:** Well, a kind of historicism [inaudible].

**LS:** No, no. What’s the title?

**Student:** Oh, the first chapter; I thought you meant the first paragraph of this chapter.

**LS:** “Of the Prejudices of the Philosophers,” which means the philosophy of the past, but is also an indication of the right kind of philosophy. And what is the difference between chapter 2 and chapter 1 from this point of view—because, as appeared from your presentation, he is still speaking of the philosophers?

**Student:** Chapter 2 goes beyond chapter 1, insofar as it indicates the future.

**LS:** But is this not done also in chapter 1, when he speaks of this new kind of psychology as the philosophy of the future? Let us leave it open for the time being. But I appreciate the attempt you made to understand [inaudible] if you raise this question, for example, when we come to chapter 3. Loosely translated: religion. And then there is a chapter on morality. So you see [that] these are clearly different subjects, at least on the face of it, whereas the relation of chapter 1 to chapter 2 is not so clear. We will take that up. Thank you very much.

I was asked by Mr. [student] regarding paragraph 21 in the first chapter. Now, I don’t have much time; I can only tell you this. Nietzsche here takes over something, a view according to which causality belongs to the phenomenal world only, not to the world as it is in itself. And therefore the will to power—which is the thing in itself, according to Nietzsche—therefore its producing something cannot be understood in terms of causality. That’s all I can tell you now. This view goes back to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche’s teacher, in a way; so if this is fundamentally questionable, that applies to this whole approach. We cannot go into that now.

Since our time is limited, we must now turn to our section [inaudible] from chapter 1, and that is only confirmed by chapter 2: philosophy and science have become radically

questionable for Nietzsche. This in itself is nothing new; at all times there has been a thing called skepticism. But Nietzsche is not a skeptic. There is a saying of Pascal, to whom Nietzsche refers more than once, explicitly or implicitly: “We know too little to be dogmatists, and too much to be skeptics.”<sup>ii</sup> This I think we may also ascribe to Nietzsche. We will see later on that in a certain sense he is willing to be a skeptic, but we are not yet at this [inaudible]. When Pascal made this statement, he was guided by his Christian faith—or by his interpretations of the Christian faith, by his belief in revelation. This possibility never existed for Nietzsche. Therefore philosophy and science become radically questionable, but in such a way that philosophy remains the highest possibility open to man, there is no question: the highest form of life, as Plato said, as Aristotle said, and as Nietzsche admits when he says philosophy is the most spiritual will to power. Nevertheless, traditional philosophy is impossible; a radically new kind of philosophy, a philosophy of the future is what he demands and, in a way, sketches.

The highest form of life is philosophy. Nietzsche does not say this of science. He presupposes, in other words, the distinction between philosophy and science. Let us consider one moment this presupposition, the distinction between philosophy and science. Traditionally, we may say philosophy and science were identical; so what we call natural science and natural philosophy meant the same thing; political science and political philosophy meant the same thing. Philosophy or science as such are the quest for *the* truth about the whole. Now this attempt had apparently failed, and this showed itself in the variety of doctrines. To limit ourselves to premodern times, say to the situation in the early sixteenth century: There were Platonists, there were Aristotelians, there were Stoics, there were Epicureans; and there were perhaps some other things, but these four are perfectly sufficient to show that philosophy was not simply a success. This fact, this variety or anarchy of doctrines, led to the consequence that dogmatism—the [term]<sup>1</sup> that originally meant nothing but to make positive assertions about the whole—was accompanied by skepticism, by the questioning of whether it is possible to answer this question about the whole.

Then there came the great revolution in the seventeenth century, from which modern thought as such emerged; it suffices to think of Descartes. What Descartes tried to do, as becomes clear from his writings, is a new philosophy, a new dogmatic philosophy; but in contradistinction to the traditional philosophies, a dogmatism on the basis of radical skepticism. One must doubt everything; and then we find something absolutely certain, whatever that may be. This absolutely certain thing which survives the extreme skepticism is the starting point of the new philosophy [inaudible], of a new dogmatic philosophy. Descartes, his predecessors, and his successors, believed to have discovered a new plane of human thought. One can say in retrospect (and some people even said it at the time) that this new plane is characterized—this dogmatism based on skepticism—is based on a synthesis of two previously incompatible things: Plato (or Platonism) and Epicureanism. To illustrate this very briefly: in political philosophy, Plato’s doctrine was public-spirited, just as Aristotle’s and the Stoic doctrine too. The Epicurean doctrine was not public-spirited; it was animated only by the concern with the ease of the life of the

---

<sup>ii</sup> The saying is compatible with number 395, in section 6 of Pascal’s *Pensées*.

individual, apolitical life. This was due to the fact that the Epicureans said that the good is identical to the pleasant; in other words, they were hedonists.

The new thing which came into being in the seventeenth century—and the most important representatives of it are Hobbes and Locke—is a public-spirited hedonism, a hedonism which issues in political action. We know this [inaudible] utilitarianism is a later form of that, and if we scratch a little bit the surface of present-day social science, we will also find the same thing. Now in natural philosophy, we see this synthesis between Plato and Epicureanism at this point: Epicureanism was atomism—you know, a doctrine of corpuscula. It had nothing whatever to do with mathematics. Plato was the philosopher who regarded mathematics as crucial: that no one without mathematics should enter his Academy was allegedly written at the entrance. The combination of a mathematical atomism: this was the new thing.

Now this new philosophy or science, which emerged in the seventeenth century and which culminated in Newton's work, was successful but not altogether successful. It was signally successful in natural philosophy, in physics; this led to the consequence that in the eighteenth century, as the century went on, physics understood itself as metaphysically neutral. Prior to the success of that movement starting from Galileo and culminating in Newton, a physicist meant—if a man said he was a physicist—that either he was a Platonist, or an Aristotelian, or a Stoic, or an Epicurean; there was no physics simply. Now this new physics proved to be metaphysically neutral; as neutral, we can say, as mathematics, to some extent, and also as the art of shoemaking: no one ever said you had to belong to a particular philosophic school to be a competent shoemaker. And this later on—the success of this physics, and accompanying sciences—led then to the view which we [inaudible] call positivism, according to which scientific knowledge, in the sense of modern science, is the only legitimate form of knowledge; and that philosophy, as philosophy, is bunk. This is not quite feasible, as can be indicated by a very simple external fact: the founder of positivism was Auguste Comte, and Comte called his doctrine positive philosophy.<sup>iii</sup> So it is hard to avoid, apparently. Even granted the absolute superiority of modern natural science to all other forms of knowledge ever known to man, philosophy is still necessary, somehow. Philosophic questions somehow remain.

Let me come back to Nietzsche. Nietzsche says that philosophy remains the highest form of life, although it must become a radically new kind of philosophy. But he also calls this new kind of thinking psychology, even physiology. So there is [inaudible] the simple distinction between philosophy and science is questionable for Nietzsche, as is indicated by the fact which I just mentioned. Now what is the fundamental defect of all earlier philosophy which forces one to look out for a new kind? Or what is the same question: What is the characteristic of the philosophy of the future? From other writings of Nietzsche, we know—and it is perhaps an unfair advantage which I have because I have considered some of the other writings, but it's all right: I'm supposed to know [inaudible] Nietzsche says all earlier philosophers lacked the sense of history, the

---

<sup>iii</sup> Auguste Comte, *The System of Positive Philosophy*, 4 vols. (1851-1854).

historical sense. The new thing is the discovery of man's essential historicity, as it is now called. There is no unchangeable essence of man: his very essence changes, and not merely the costumes, the customs, the externals. There are certain things, of course, which remain unchanged: for example, the anatomy and physiology of man, the facts of sense perception and memory, and what have you. But even those things which do not change, change their meaning and that is of crucial importance. For man is a part of the whole, and how any part is understood depends on how the whole is understood or, to use now Nietzsche's favorite expression, on how the whole is "interpreted." The interpretation presupposes some matter, some *hylē*, and ultimately a matter which is in no way created by man; that is what Nietzsche calls "the text," in contradistinction to the interpretation of the text. But that matter, which we must admit is wholly meaningless, wholly unarticulated: its meaning depends on the forms which are stamped on it, and these forms change from epoch to epoch.

We may use another term which Nietzsche uses (and which is not only in Nietzsche). According to the traditional view there are certain fundamental concepts by which things are understood, and they were called for some reason "the categories"—not in the loose sense in which you say that there is a category of white chickens and black chickens, or public servants with a college degree or with a Ph.D. and so on, where simply kinds or genus would be sufficient—but *the* categories. These categories traditionally were understood of course to be always the same as the essential forms in which the human understanding always understands [things].<sup>2</sup> Now it is said that the categories themselves change and, furthermore, what Nietzsche also says, that change is not progress. If it were a progress, we could say that, well, we are sitting pretty; there may be some questions, but no alternative of which we can conceivably know could disturb us. The trouble is that we have no reason to assume progress. Therefore Nietzsche could try to return to pre-Socratic philosophers as in this decisive respect superior to all later philosophers.

This view (loosely, that is) is what I understand by historicism. The best book known to me in the English tongue that presents the historicist view is the work of Collingwood,<sup>iv</sup> *The Idea of History*; though in a way even better, because it was completed by the author (*The Idea of History* being edited only after his death), is his *Autobiography*. Collingwood presents the position as follows. All human thought rests on what he calls "absolute presuppositions." These absolute presuppositions change from epoch to epoch, and this change is not essentially progress. All thought depends on presuppositions which are not fully evident to it—which are, as it were, here and not here so you cannot see them clearly, and which change from epoch to epoch. Now the question arises: What is the character of that very insight, namely, that all thought rests on such absolute presuppositions? Is it not as theoretical as the insights of traditional philosophy claimed to be? Is it not *the* truth—meaning the ultimate at which we can possibly arrive—that we understand this fact of absolute presuppositions and their changeability? Is this not that at which we ultimately arrive, and therefore the true subject of philosophy? Does it not therefore transcend history because it is true of all epochs, past and future? Even if it is granted that this insight could not have been gained at all times but only at a particular

---

<sup>iv</sup> R.G. Collingwood (b. 1889), British philosopher and historian.

time, because men had to go through all kinds of trials and errors until they could understand their thinking, yet it could be an insight transcending all history because it is *the* fundamental truth about all human thought and action, about human history. Yet if it is taken as such, it is according to Nietzsche deadly, paralyzing, sterile; it leads in fact to the consequence that men rest satisfied with a hodge-podge consisting of relics from earlier philosophy. In other words, you know that your thought rests on certain fundamental presuppositions, and that is as true of your thought as of the thought of the past, but you can no longer identify yourself with your absolute presuppositions, because you know they have this character. You are aware of this difficulty, as I saw from your paper. But still we live, we think, we articulate things. How do we do it? We don't have the power to have another absolute presupposition, and therefore we live on the heritage of the past by having such a hodge-podge.

The historicist insight must be integrated then into a comprehensive philosophy, into a new kind of answer to the age-old question concerning the whole. That is to say, the historicist insight cannot be understood as transcending history; there must be another dispensation if we are to take our bearings on the basis of the historicist insight. This means that the philosophy of the future, in contradistinction to all earlier philosophies, knows that it is based on presuppositions which it cannot make evident. This implies that it is as little merely theoretical as the earlier philosophies. The earlier philosophers claimed that they are purely theoretical; but Nietzsche shows that they make certain assumptions, certain preferences, certain choices. The new philosophy of the future is as much based on an act of the will to power as these earlier philosophies were; it differs from all earlier philosophies only by its knowledge that a purely theoretical philosophy, a philosophy fully conscious of its presuppositions, is impossible. Nietzsche states this succinctly by quoting this medieval Latin verse: "A donkey is arrived/ Beautiful and very strong."<sup>v</sup> That's at the bottom of every philosophy: a stupid, obstinate ass.

**Student:** The statement that the new philosophy of the future rests as much on the will to power as the old one, this is a statement in itself part of the new philosophy, is that right?

**LS:** Not quite; because that was common opinion . . . .

**Student:** What I mean is, that statement itself is still subject to the same question [inaudible] that statement itself rests on the knowledge that it's only based on the [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, there is quite a difficulty, but one can say that there is a whole discipline which deals with this kind of difficulty called logic. To say it very simply: an earlier German philosopher, Schelling, made a distinction between negative philosophy and positive philosophy. Negative philosophy is the same as rational philosophy; but it is negative because it leads only to an insight into the limitations of rational knowledge without being able to lead beyond it, and at the same time it lets us see the inadequacy of rational philosophy, rational knowledge. But it cannot supply the positive one. Something of this

---

<sup>v</sup> *BGE* 8. Presumably Strauss's translation.

kind happens in Nietzsche, too. In other words, people would say [inaudible] well, the famous story, which I drew before *n* times. [LS writes on the blackboard] Aristotle and Locke, political philosophers; and here is the *Politics*, and here is *Civil Government*. You know what I mean by this, book titles? Good. Both are political philosophers, and they are incompatible doctrines. And then people say: But why are they so different? Was Locke less intelligent and so on, or more intelligent? No, that is hard to say. But Locke was a seventeenth-century Englishman; Aristotle was a fourth-century Greek. If you take this into consideration, you understand the difference. Do you see that? That is elementary. Now they teach that in high schools, I believe. Is it not so? More or less. It is ordinary empirical knowledge that we observe this correlation. This doesn't cause any problem because this is wholly prefatory to any serious [inaudible]. But the [valid] generalization is not, because the generalization means that there is . . . no political philosophy in the sense in which both Aristotle and Locke understood it to be possible, because a political philosopher is a man who claims to answer the question of what the best regime or the good society are in a universally valid manner. This can no longer be attempted once you know that it cannot be answered in a universally valid manner, because every answer will be dated and therefore you give it up. You know that that is what happens. But the question is whether this is feasible. It is feasible in the sense that what is actual must be possible; but one can also say it is as feasible as it is feasible to contradict oneself in an outrageous manner. In another sense it is of course not feasible.

**Student:** I don't want to spend too much time on this, but my question was really directed to the following: Once Nietzsche can recognize, say, the element of historicism, and that the philosophy of the future will be consciously aware of its historical place, once he recognizes this and states it, I wonder how much he really keeps within that confine.

**LS:** Yes, that is the point, whether that is feasible. In other words, whether it is not [inaudible] this historicist insight is meant to be universally valid; we know that now, after all these trials and errors. And this can be lost. That means, however, that there can be a new barbarism. That can come; that is all right. I mean it is not [inaudible]. This doesn't create a theoretical problem because this means that people become in fact more stupid, but this is in a way the last word. The question is: Can you leave this historicist insight with its empirical basis at that—you know, this simple reasoning which I sketched now or something of this kind? Must you not have some answer to the question of the good life, or whatever you call it? And must your answer not raise the same claim as the old answers raised, namely to be universally valid? Or can you say it is the truth for today or for our period? Is the latter thing feasible? That is doubtless Nietzsche's question. Therefore he says the will to power is an hypothesis or an invention—or on the other hand, he says it is a discovery of the truth. This is I think the most obvious theoretical difficulty in Nietzsche's thought.

I mention only one further point. The change of the categories of which I spoke—I hope I have made clear what I mean by this—is an observable fact, allegedly. For example, you must have read *n* times in magazines and in other places that people say our understanding of time differs from the Chinese understanding. That applies to all [inaudible] our understanding of cause, all the fundamental notions. This change of

categories, this can be established allegedly by simple observation. [But] can it be *explained*? If we take the greatest antagonist of Nietzsche—not the conscious antagonist, but in fact *the* antagonist, Marx—he would say that of course it can be explained: that is, that this change of categories is the change in the superstructure, and we explain it by understanding the change in the infrastructure. We know that the *modes* of history are the relations of production, and we observe the relations of production in China on the one hand and, say, in European Middle Ages on the other; it is as easy as that. Of course, they don't do it in fact; that is only a claim [inaudible]. I am not aware of any Marxist having done this in a convincing manner, except perhaps regarding nineteenth century novels<sup>vi</sup>, though not regarding these questions. But does not every explanation—this is a question addressed to Marx, and not only to Marx—does not every explanation of the change of categories, or world views (however you call it), presuppose specific categories, specific absolute presuppositions, which are as little simply true as those underlying earlier philosophies? In other words, are matters perhaps such that the change of categories cannot be truly explained, even if they are the ultimate end at which we arrive? If I'm not mistaken, that is the key difference—or implies, or includes the key difference between Nietzsche and Heidegger.

Now in Nietzsche's situation it is more complicated. Nietzsche seems to claim that he has found an explanation of the change of the categories, namely, the will to power. Yet, as we have also seen, he is hesitant in this respect. This is the great difficulty; and we must see why he was hesitant. What he says about that is perhaps not difficult to understand; but the question is what induced him to be certain, more certain than he seems to be, in fact.

Let us turn to the second chapter. Mr. [student] tried to explain the beginning: "*O sancta simplicitas!*"<sup>vii</sup> It is surely a remarkable beginning, "O saintly simplicity," and it may very well indicate all kinds of things which happen later on; a connection between simplicity—impossible simplicity—and sanctity, that's what you meant? Possible; I do not know. What I believe to see is this: that this chapter still deals with philosophy, and the question is why he devotes two chapters to philosophy whereas he devotes only one chapter to the other themes. Could it be merely a concern with external symmetry; in other words, that he did not wish to have too long a chapter, about twice as long as the others? But if we look more closely, we see that there is a difference in emphasis. In the second chapter the relation of the philosopher to the non-philosophers is a major theme (although not the only theme): how the philosopher acts with respect to the non-philosophers, and [inaudible] how he appears to them—in other words, the popular aspect of philosophy. Therefore the title is wisely chosen because in the nineteenth century the philosopher was frequently identified popularly with the freethinker in the sense which the word had in America also, of course, as I happen to know. So in considering this question, I had to consider (and Mr. [student] has done that) Nietzsche's way of writing, of which he says something here, but still, I think we should briefly discuss it in advance.

---

<sup>vi</sup> Strauss may be thinking of Georg Lukás, *Studies in European Realism* (London: Hillway, 1950).

<sup>vii</sup> *BGE* 24.

Do you have *The Genealogy of Morals* here? The end of the Preface, paragraph 8. We don't need the first half: "In other cases, the aphoristic form."

**Reader:** "the aphoristic form may present a stumbling-block . . . a whole science of hermeneutics."

**LS:** "of interpretation": if he (the translator) uses it in the first case, he should use it in the second case.

**Reader:** "In the third essay of this book, I give an example of what I mean by true interpretation—"

**LS:** "a model" more than an example.

**Reader:** "an aphorism stands at the head . . . difficult to digest."<sup>viii</sup>

**LS:** So here Nietzsche has [inaudible] one of you came to my office and complained about—or not "complained" but noted with regret—the difficulty he had in understanding a certain short paragraph, an aphorism. Here you have the explanation: Nietzsche was aware of that difficulty. He wrote in aphorisms, in separate, relatively short statements. The connections with the preceding and the following ones are not made clear. They are integrated in a very general way by the chapter headings in this particular work, but this is of course not sufficient. Nietzsche's choice of the aphorism form had a variety of reasons. The most important point can be stated as follows, in the words of Nietzsche. The alternative to the aphorism or aphorisms is the philosophic system, as it was made by the famous German philosophers of the early nineteenth century, but also by earlier ones in modern times. The aphorism is the opposite to the system, and according to Nietzsche the system is incompatible with probity, intellectual probity. The aphorism belongs to a way of thinking which is thoroughly honest.

The philosopher is supposed to know the essence of all things. If you look, for example, at the works of Hegel, there is no part of the world, of the human world in particular, which is not discussed there systematically. But no man can do that. Think of very simple things: How can a man write an aesthetics with a section on music if he is not musical? How can he discuss mathematics if he is not a mathematician, or at least [a] very well trained mathematician? I choose these examples because Nietzsche happened to be very inadequate in mathematics, but he understood quite a bit of music. More precisely, the aphorism imitates the insights as they occur, and not as they are called forth in order to fill lacunae, because that is already tampering with the evidence somewhat. They imitate the insights which occur as *they* will, and not as the conscious ego wills. Nietzsche did plan to give a coherent exposition of his view of the whole in this planned book, *The Will to Power*, but he did not execute that plan. Was this due to incapacity, or was it perhaps

---

<sup>viii</sup> *Genealogy of Morals*, Preface, aphorism 8, in *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Francis Golffing (New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1956), 157. (Hereafter cited as Golffing.)



due to the insolubility of his problem, this problem of history as I have tried to sketch it? We must see.

Let us turn to the second chapter, paragraph 24; I can only take up part of it. The key point here is that we live in a thoroughly falsified world; the simplest proof of it is that we understand this world by means of language (morality also plays a certain role, but I limit myself to this [inaudible]). Language always simplifies things: “dog” applies to all dogs (well, we have names for Irish setters and beagles, and so on and so on, but this does not yet allow us to distinguish this beagle here from this beagle there—the same name covers it—and quite a few other things). The truth, in contradistinction to this fundamental falsification, is a chaos of, say, mere sense data, wholly disordered, out of which we make a wholly artificial order. Now science, which raises a very high claim, is based on and presupposes this prescientific ordering. It is based on this foundation of untruth. This proves, as Nietzsche says here, that science is in harmony with life, because without this previous simplification, crude simplification, man could not live. This is the main point stated in number 24. You would notice that here he speaks only of science, and not of philosophy. And it ends in an apparently frivolous tone: well, we live in an apparently superficial world, and let us accept that superficiality gaily; that’s just fine. But (and that’s the transition to the sequel) this, we—all people—can afford, even the scientists. Only one kind of man cannot afford it, and these are the philosophers. They are to be of a different kind. Let us read the first two sentences of paragraph 25.

**Reader:** “After such a cheerful commencement . . . and beware of martyrdom!”<sup>ix</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. The philosophers are the most serious of men; they question the gay acceptance of ordinary understanding, including scientific understanding. This means, of course, that—since we have learned that science is in harmony with life because it is based on the ordinary understanding that is needed for life—that the philosophers, questioning the basis of all life including science, are *not* in harmony with life. They are, therefore [inaudible] and this shows itself most obviously in the fact that they are not in harmony with their fellow men; that forces them, apparently, into the situation of being martyrs for the truth. They are not in harmony; they say things which are paradoxical or shocking, and they are persecuted [inaudible]. Nietzsche makes clear that this martyrdom for the truth is a danger for the quest of truth. Let us read a bit later on; omit two sentences: “After all, you know.”

**Reader:** “After all<sup>x</sup>, you know sufficiently well that it . . . before accusers and law courts.”<sup>xi</sup>

**LS:** In other words, there is something [inaudible] men become stupid if they are in a position where they have to defend themselves, and even more so if they work themselves up into a state of moral indignation (which is developed later on in this

---

<sup>ix</sup> BGE 25. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 408.

<sup>x</sup> In original, “finally.”

<sup>xi</sup> BGE 25. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 409.

chapter). The conclusion: the philosopher must live in solitude, the [inaudible]. But, as Nietzsche points out, it must be a *good* solitude, as he calls it here, which means one sought without hatred, resentment, and especially moral indignation.<sup>3</sup> The philosopher will live in solitude. This is of course possible in Chicago, in New York City, in a garage somewhere, and no one would know what he is doing. That is all right. But is there not a danger in solitude, apart from resentment and bitterness and that kind of thing? We know from the first chapter that the philosopher must be a psychologist, and that means that he must have knowledge of men in general, not only of philosophers. He must know the rule and not merely the exception (the exception being himself, the philosopher). Therefore the philosopher cannot remain in solitude: he must go down, to quote someone else; you know whom I quote?

**Student:** Plato's *Republic* . . . [inaudible].

**LS:** Sure, they must go down to the cave again. He must go down; he cannot remain a solitary.

And now Nietzsche says this: Well, he can't look—"crawl," as he says, with an abominable expression—he can't crawl into the soul of everyone, so he needs "abbreviations," as he calls it. Abbreviations are certain kinds of men who bring out, without shame, the things which are conventionally concealed. These are the cynics; Nietzsche says here that the cynic is preferable to the morally indignant man because the morally indignant man conceals unconsciously very important things, especially regarding the grounds of his own moral indignation. The cynic is beyond good and evil whereas the morally indignant man is not; and therefore the former is more open to other things. Nietzsche leaves no doubt that he does not agree with the cynics. He gives one example which I think doesn't need any special comment: wherever someone speaks only of hunger, sexual desire, and vanity . . . .

**Reader:** "as the real and only motives of human actions . . . wherever there is talk without indignation."<sup>xii</sup>

**LS:** So Nietzsche does not agree with me [sic]<sup>xiii</sup>; he would say that that is a very narrow view of man, and therefore that the will to power as he understands it (especially since there is a spiritual will to power) is much broader, of course, than hunger, sex, and vanity. Still, the fact that Nietzsche speaks with relative praise of the "cynics" (in the modern sense of the word more than in the ancient sense) is liable to be misunderstood, as if Nietzsche had anything to do with these rather dirty fellows. Therefore he comes to number 27.

**Student:** At the end of 25, what did Nietzsche mean when he said in the very last sentence that "every philosophy was in its genesis a long tragedy"?

---

<sup>xii</sup> BGE 26. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 411-12.

<sup>xiii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

**LS:** Oh, he said, “presupposing that”: “presupposing,” though we can say that that is a presupposition which we will consider when we have been given a reason. Is this not reasonable? Think of men [inaudible] why should one say that, say, Plato’s philosophy was in the beginning a tragedy? Because Socrates was executed? That’s not exactly a tragedy. Or that Kant’s or Hume’s philosophy was—that is a Nietzschean suggestion which we will consider when we have heard more about it. But he does not even assert it here; he only says, “assuming.”

Let us read number 27. The transition, to repeat, was this: Nietzsche has taken the side of the most unsavory men. His example is the Abbé Galiani, but we know also other people who would take this cynical view. There is a well-known book in political science which begins, I believe, with the assertion that there are three human motives: safety, income, and deference<sup>xiv</sup>. That is also the view that Nietzsche is referring to. I mean the view that there is nothing else besides these motives; that a man could be public-spirited or something such is excluded by this statement from the very beginning. I’m quoting from memory, so please do not quote me. Now, read us number 27.

**Reader:** “It is difficult to be understood . . . refinement of interpretation.”<sup>xv</sup>

**LS:** In other words, Nietzsche *knows* that he will be misunderstood—for example, in his statement about the cynics—but it cannot be helped. It cannot be helped because otherwise he would have to write ten pages and state in detail his criticism of cynicism lest he be mistaken for a cynic, and probably also include footnotes, because the word cynicism has a variety of meanings. And this he doesn’t want to do. We leave it at that.

The second half of this paragraph, of which you made very much, is not so important. We go over to the next point. He had now spoken [inaudible] the difficulties of understanding are due to the fact that different men have a different tempo of thinking: quick, like a quick river; or very slow, like a tortoise or a frog. Read the beginning of paragraph 28.

**Reader:** “What is most difficult to render from one language into another is the tempo of its style—”<sup>xvi</sup>

**LS:** Now, you see, he means the tempo of *thinking*—the words were not used, but were implied—the tempo of their style. He develops some very beautiful things in this paragraph about the German style in particular, and he praises Lessing as particularly un-German, an un-German prosaist. But let us read only the latter half: “But how could the German.”

**Reader:** “But how could the German language . . . and of the best, wantonest humor?”<sup>xvii</sup>

---

<sup>xiv</sup> We have not been able to identify this book.

<sup>xv</sup> BGE 27. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 412.

<sup>xvi</sup> BGE 28. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 412.

<sup>xvii</sup> BGE 28. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 412-13.

**LS:** This I mention because we are supposed to be concerned with Machiavelli here too, and those who have read the *Principe* in a tolerable translation, if not in the Italian, will immediately understand what Nietzsche means when he reads, for example, the beautiful story of the Cesare Borgia's executioner (Himmler, as I call him), what was his name?

**Student:** Remirro de Orco.

**LS:** Whom he had cut to pieces, yes.<sup>xviii</sup> And there are other beauties there, but let us now read only the end, regarding Aristophanes.

**Reader:** "With regard to Aristophanes . . . How could even Plato have endured life—a Greek life which he repudiated—without an Aristophanes?"<sup>xix</sup>

**LS:** This is also a very remarkable hint. Nietzsche seems to imply that Plato needed Aristophanes as a comfort; I do not believe that this is correct, but a certain kinship, a very important kinship, doubtless exists. But I say this only in passing. We go on now in paragraph 29. The quest for truth requires independence of thought, that is to say, a form of strength. It requires extreme exclusiveness, because you must be willing to question everything said. Let us turn to paragraph 30.

**Reader:** "Our deepest insights . . . in respect to the exoteric class, standing without—"

**LS:** That would be the literal translation, or also: "exoteric," "the outside."

**Reader:** "and viewing, estimating, measuring, views things *from above downwards*."<sup>xx</sup>

**LS:** We leave it here. This remark is a very remarkable divination; as far as I know, Nietzsche had no empirical knowledge of these things, except of the general tradition that there were these distinctions between exoteric and esoteric teaching. In the next paragraph, Nietzsche speaks of another condition of philosophy, which is not supplied by thinking as such: that is maturity. He speaks of the fact that young people necessarily think, feel, smell, see differently than mature people. There are three stages which he here distinguishes, and this is the transition to the next paragraph, 32, where Nietzsche distinguishes three stages of the moral judgment in human history. We cannot read this, unfortunately; it is much too long. Only one point must be noted: what he says about the third stage of this moral development. That is about the last third of this aphorism: "Should we not today have arrived at the necessity."

**Reader:** "Is it not possible, however, that the necessity may now have arisen of again making up our minds with regard to the reversing and fundamental shifting of values, owing to a new self-consciousness and acuteness in man—"

---

<sup>xviii</sup> Cesare Borgia (b. 1475), Italian lord, son of Pope Alexander VI. Often discussed in exemplary terms in Machiavelli's *Prince*. For the story of Remirro de Orco, see *The Prince*, chap. 7.

<sup>xix</sup> BGE 28. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 414.

<sup>xx</sup> BGE 30. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 415.

**LS:** No, no; that is not the word: thanks [or owing] to a new [or another] act of reflection [*Selbstbesinnung*, reflection on our selves] and deepening of man.” This attempt of man to know himself, to reflect on himself, *changes* man<sup>4</sup>. That is true not only of the individual but also of the human race, which means that a seemingly purely theoretical act—the attempt to know oneself, one’s age, one’s culture, or whatever it may be—this is in itself practical, because it changes you. And the opposite is also true. Now, begin again.

**Reader:** “Is it not possible, however . . . owing to a new self-reflection and deepening of man— . . . distinguished negatively as *ultra-moral*—”

**LS:** No, “extra-moral.” The first was pre-moral; then there was a moral period; and this is extra-moral.

**Reader:** “nowadays when, at least amongst . . . the intention is only a sign or symptom—”

**LS:** The intention was regarded as the criterion during the moral period.

**Reader:** “which first requires an explanation . . . but in any case something which must be surmounted. The surmounting of morality, in a certain sense even the self-surmounting of morality—”

**LS:** “Self-overcoming.”

**Reader:** “let that be the name . . . the living touchstones of the soul.”<sup>xxi</sup>

**LS:** So, you see, that is also characteristic. First, Nietzsche says that morality in the hitherto understood sense has to be overcome, which means the appearance of a new morality. But then he speaks later on of the overcoming of morality, in a certain sense even the self-overcoming of morality. Which is meant: a new morality, or is this new thing no longer to be called a morality? Nietzsche leaves this open; and we must wait. There will be a special chapter on morality.

This questioning of morality as hitherto understood leads him in the next paragraph to a criticism of the notion of unselfishness as the criterion of goodness. Then we come to paragraph 34, which is of special importance. He still continues the criticism of morality, but now from the point of view of the philosopher; I mean, of the philosopher’s own life. The philosopher must question the very concept of truth, the traditional concept of truth, because Nietzsche regards the will to truth—as we know from the very beginning, from number 1—as a moral phenomenon. Veracity, probity, intellectual probity: those are the same. Therefore the philosopher must overcome, must not take for granted even this, as we know, his will to truth. Why must he question that? Because what we ordinarily understand by truth is perhaps not the truth. Let us read the beginning of this paragraph.

---

<sup>xxi</sup> BGE 32. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 418.

**Reader:** “At whatever standpoint of philosophy . . . certain thing our eyes can light upon—”

**LS:** Can *still*, can still light upon. In other words, that’s the last thing we can barely perceive.

**Reader:** “we find proof after proof . . . in the ‘nature of things.’”<sup>xxii</sup>

**LS:** In the essence of things. And now to the end—we cannot read the whole, unfortunately: “Why should not the world.”

**Reader:** “the world *which concerns us* . . . this ‘belong’ also belong to the fiction?”<sup>xxiii</sup>

**LS:** In other words, Mr. [student], causality. Leave it at that. Now this is a key point—I will try to state it, but I wonder whether we have time. Philosophy was originally the quest for the truth or, we may say, for the world as it truly is, as it is in itself—in itself meaning independently of human convention: *physis*, nature, in contradistinction to *nomos*, convention. I give you a simple example. Consider a cow (this is a favorite example of Nietzsche himself) with all its characteristics which we know, more or less. Consider now that it has however one quality which not all people see or admit, and that is that it is sacred. This quality, which especially the Hindus admit, is by *nomos*, by convention. But that it is, say (blue would not be a good color), brown or white, and that it ruminates, and does the other peculiar things that it does—it is not carnivorous, and so—this is by nature. If the cow has a name, this would of course also be conventional, because it could be called Gretchen and it could be called Eileen; that wouldn’t make any difference to the cow [inaudible] it is so blissfully unaware of it.<sup>5</sup>

This simple starting point of philosophy, the distinction between what belongs to the thing in itself and what belongs to the thing merely on the basis of convention, was radicalized in modern times, in modern physics. In the world of modern physics (as prepared by Epicureanism, but we cannot go into that now) [LS writes on the blackboard], not only conventional qualities, like the sacredness of the cow or the value attached to it from this or that point of view, but even its being brown, and the other so-called secondary qualities, were questioned. The world in itself is the world in which there are only primary qualities, as Locke calls them: size, weight, and bulk. Everything else is secondary and due to the character of the perceptor. This world of modern physics is the “true” world; that was the way in which it was originally understood. It differs strikingly from the world in which we live, in which of course cows have colors and give sounds and have other secondary and even tertiary qualities. And that is what Nietzsche calls the world which is of concern to us.

---

<sup>xxii</sup> BGE 34. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 419.

<sup>xxiii</sup> BGE 34. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 421.

Now Nietzsche makes this grave step. He says that this world that is of concern to us is the only world in which we are reasonably interested. Not the world in itself or, to use the language which he uses from time to time, the “true” world. Whether the “true” world exists in the sense of the Platonic ideas or in the sense of modern physics of no concern to us—those are ultimately the same from his point of view. The world of concern to us is the world in which we live. This world which is of concern to us is man’s work. There must be some *hylē*, some matter, but it is in chaos which is then ordered by us. What we know, and what is embodied in our language and everything men say about it, is the work of man, the unconscious work of man. Now, owing to the historical sense, we have become conscious of it. As a consequence—and this is important—the original distinction between nature and convention, *physis* and *nomos*, is replaced by a radically different distinction. We can call this the distinction between the surface—or even a modification of the surface, like in modern physics—and the depth. That is the change which Nietzsche tried to effect.

It is clear that nature in the original sense is unhistorical. Man’s doings and thinkings do not affect it; it is given. But this depth which things acquire in the course of [the] millennia in which men interpreted things: this is essentially historical and is still undergoing a change. This means that even the secondary qualities (i.e., the sense qualities: colors, sounds, and so on) are not sufficient for making the thing in its fullness. The thing in its fullness includes also value characteristics, which differ from culture to culture, and from age to age. Value characteristics also include the sacred. From this point of view, the Hindu view that the cow is sacred is a more profound characteristic of the cow than the things which everyone can say and see, such as that the cow is, let us say, brown. Something much deeper in man than sense perception has entered into this interpretation. The thing as experienced by art and by religion, not only by sense perception, is the full thing, and this has very grave consequences in Nietzsche, as we shall see later.

I think I have to stop now; but try to reflect on this point which I have been trying to make in the last ten minutes, and surely imperfectly. We have to come back to this profound and radical change in orientation which Nietzsche tries to effect, and which is a complete inversion of the distinction from which philosophy started, the distinction between *physis* and *nomos*. Superficially one could say *nomos*, what was traditionally called convention, is now much more important than *physis*; and that is of course an important part of historicism.

[end of tape]

---

<sup>1</sup> Changed from “assertion.”

<sup>2</sup> Changed from “them.”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “now, the next paragraph—so, that’s fine.”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “changes man.”

<sup>5</sup> Deleted “and in a way it is aware of it indeed.”

### Session 6: no date

**Leo Strauss:** What is the title of that chapter on which you reported?<sup>i</sup>

**Student:** “The Nature of Religion.”

**LS:** Let us assume that this is a tolerable translation of the title.

**Student:** “What Is Religion?”

**LS:** Yes, perhaps. This was not noticeable from your paper. You did refer quite a few times to Christianity, but it wasn’t clear that this is the chapter devoted to religion or religions. This is perhaps connected with other difficulties. You said you would make clear what Nietzsche means by “beyond good and evil,” and then you said later on that good and evil are understood on the basis of the identification of the good with the unselfish and with the compassionate. You also said you would make clear what Nietzsche means by “beyond good and evil” on the basis of aphorism number 56. This I did not quite understand. What is the content of number 56?

**Student:** The content was that he begins by talking about what he believes is the cause of pessimism.

**LS:** What is the connection between good and evil, and pessimism?

**Student:** The fact that good and evil have these particular meanings is due to the fact that man looks for something beyond the world in which we live, something transcending it, some order.

**LS:** Can one not understand this more simply the other way around? That is, if you understand by “good” what traditional morality understands by it, does this not necessarily lead to pessimism? Is that what he means?

**Student:** You mean, the good being identical with the [inaudible].

**LS:** With the unselfish, let us say.

**Student:** The world is the other way around.

**LS:** That is, I believe, what Nietzsche suggests: that if the good is the unselfish, and this is against nature, then the result must be that men are necessarily evil because they can’t help being selfish, to state it very simply. Therefore Nietzsche says that pessimism—and

---

<sup>i</sup> Strauss responds to a student’s paper, read at the start of the session. The reading was not recorded.



especially that of Schopenhauer, but he claims also that of Christianity and Buddhism—is the necessary consequence of their moralism in this sense. What is, then, Nietzsche’s proposal regarding pessimism? The alternative to pessimism is, of course, optimism; but is this what Nietzsche proposes?

**Student:** It seems he almost feels that pessimism is an inevitable aspect of our life, that it can’t be [inaudible].

**LS:** Well, pessimism, as the “ism” indicates, is not a character of life but a certain doctrine. So be a bit more precise: What does pessimism say, then?

**Student:** I don’t understand the question.

**LS:** Well, you cannot say that pessimism is a necessary ingredient of our life, because it is a doctrine.

**Student:** It is a reflection of the fact that in our life there is both good and evil, and that there cannot be just good alone.

**LS:** In other words, to put the emphasis properly, human life is inseparable from suffering and evil. And the pre-Nietzschean pessimist says, hence we must [inaudible].

**Student:** We must look outside the world, to something divine.

**LS:** Yes, we must say no to this world, and this may lead to the postulation of another world (as in Christianity) or—in the case of Schopenhauer, who does not make such a postulation—simply to a denial of world and of life without postulating another life, another world. Now, what does Nietzsche propose? First of all, regarding pessimism itself: the doctrine that life, evil, and suffering cannot be abolished.

**Student:** He proposes that man must adjust to it.

**LS:** No. First of all, does he accept that?

**Student:** Yes, because [inaudible].

**LS:** In other words, he does not accept the optimistic view that they can be abolished.

**Student:** No, he doesn’t.

**LS:** Good. And what is then his assertion?

**Student:** His assertion is that evil is an inherent part of change; it’s an inherent part of life, that, instead of trying to look beyond it [inaudible].

**LS:** But Schopenhauer does not do that; he only denies life.

**Student:** I know, but Nietzsche accepts the pessimism in life; he accepts the evil along with the good.

**LS:** In other words, say yes to life in spite or because of the fact that it necessarily contains suffering and evil; is that what you mean?

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Good. Now there is one more point I would like to bring up now from your paper. When you spoke of eternal return, you said it is eternal return of man's highest form: say, of the superman.

**Student:** Also of his lower forms.

**LS:** That you didn't say. That's equally [inaudible] you remember from the section in the *Zarathustra*, of the cripples and tramps.<sup>ii</sup> All right; thank you very much.

Now, we have not yet completed our discussion of the preceding chapter, and there are a few points [inaudible]. The point which I made at the end of the last meeting I must repeat, because I believe it is of decisive importance for the understanding of Nietzsche. This is the remark which Nietzsche makes here towards the end of paragraph 34, about the world which is of concern to us: Could this not be a fiction? And stating what Nietzsche alludes to: Why not accept it? Why not say yes to it, although it may be only a fiction? In order to understand that, one has to look back to the prehistory of the problem of which Nietzsche speaks. I pointed out that from the very beginning, a fundamental distinction was made by the Greek philosophers between *physis* and *nomos*, between nature and convention. I illustrated it by the simple example of the sacred cow. All the qualities and properties of the cow belong to it naturally, but that it is sacred does not belong to the cow as cow; it is not inherent to it, but it is due to men's opinions, to opinions on which men have agreed, to convention.

This distinction between [inaudible] Nietzsche does not refer to this distinction but to another one, which however has very much to do with the distinction between *physis* and *nomos*: the distinction between truth and appearance. When Nietzsche uses this distinction, he thinks in the first place of Plato: the "true" world—that is not a Platonic expression, but one can use it—is the world of ideas; the beings which come into being and perish are the world of appearance. Prior to Plato, Democritus (the father of atomism, as we can say) had made this distinction between truth and appearance, and had linked it up somehow with the distinction between nature and convention. The true world, we could say, according to Democritus, is the world in which there are only atoms and the void; the world of appearance is that not only of the sacredness of the cow, but also of its colors, sounds, and other sensible qualities. And this distinction became the basis of

---

<sup>ii</sup> In the Modern Library edition: "cripples and beggars." *Zarathustra*, 2. 20, "On Redemption." *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 150.

modern physics (I reminded you of the distinction between primary and secondary qualities as made by Locke).

Nietzsche thinks, of course, primarily of this distinction between the true world and the world of appearance: the true world as discovered by physics [and] in which there are no humanly interesting qualities, and the world in which we live, the world of concern to us. This world of physics—the world in which we do not live and in which no one could live—is, as Nietzsche has suggested in the first chapter, a fictitious world; the basic premises of physics are fictions. From this it would follow, it seems—although Nietzsche does not draw here this conclusion—that the world of concern to us, the world in which we live, is the true world. But, I repeat, this conclusion is not drawn here by Nietzsche. Now, this world of concern to us is the product of human creativity, the product of human interpretations built up in the course of millennia by men in various stages. In this world created by men, the distinction between primary and secondary qualities is of no importance, because in the world in which we live, the things [created] are not merely the objects of physics, but all the qualities, secondary and value qualities (whatever those may be).

Therefore, there are two points which have to be considered. In the first place, since this world which is of concern to us is a product of human interpretation, it is historically changing. The world in which the Greeks lived, which received its characteristics by the Greek interpretations, differs from the world in which we live, because this world in which we live is based on different interpretations. Secondly, [and] although this point is not made by Nietzsche, it underlies his thought, as we shall see in the sequel; it is also the key to the chapter on religion. I started from the distinction between nature and convention; and I exemplified that by the example of the sacredness of the cow as something which does not belong to the cow at all. Now as a consequence of this inversion effected by Nietzsche, the sacredness would belong to the cow as much as its multi-coloredness or whatever; indeed, even *more* so, because there would be much more human feeling in sacredness than in the qualities perceived by our senses. [Indeed],<sup>1</sup> one could say the full world of concern to us will necessarily include the sacred, although this sacred is historically changing; and it will necessarily be a world of God or gods. If one does not take this into consideration, I believe one will not be able to follow the argument or the suggestions of this and the next chapter. Now is this point clear, or do we have any difficulties which I might be able to dispose of?

**Student:** If the sacredness of the cow is something subject to historical changing, is its color something [inaudible]?

**LS:** No, the color [inaudible]. In the first place, that's hard to say. One would have to study very thoroughly the way in which colors are understood by various human groups, races, and so on, and which colors are preferred. For Nietzsche, deep red and yellow are the most important colors. Quite a few people might agree with that, but there are others who feel differently. The question would be whether there are differences in this respect between human communities. Could be. But the connotations of the [inaudible] a famous example is the description of the ocean in Homer, of the sea, in contrast to what we

would say about it. That is an example which is frequently used. And people see in a way differently at different ages; that is not so simple. Surely there is a kind of *hylē*, matter, which is presupposed for any interpretation, and to that extent can be said not to change. But anything of meaning is already more than the mere matter; that is here presupposed.

**Student:** Philosophers are people, too.

**LS:** Yes.

**Same Student:** And so it would seem to me that nature and physics, or primary and secondary qualities, are also distinctions which arise from part of the interpretation which people put on phenomena. So what is the difference between, say, the distinction between nature and physics and the distinction between religions and not-religious? It would seem to stand on the same basis.

**LS:** Your premise was very reasonable and also emphasized all the time by Nietzsche: philosophers are human beings. But I do not see the connection between this first premise and either the second premise or the conclusion.

**Student:** Nietzsche seems to say that that which human beings read into the phenomena is what the phenomena are; or that the sacredness is part of the cow because human beings see it as a part [inaudible].

**LS:** No, that is an interpretation from Nietzsche's point of view; that is not simply the text. That is an interpretation; but the point is that if we do not interpret things and interpret with all our powers, then the result will be a very impoverished world, like the world of physics.

**Student:** Is physics not also an interpretation?

**LS:** Sure, that is what Nietzsche says.

**Student:** Then how does he distinguish between the interpretation of religion and the interpretation of physics?

**LS:** Very simply and very loosely stated: the interpretation by physics is of eminent practical usefulness, but of very little human value. The religious interpretation is much richer. You cannot live on the physical interpretation as a human being; you can live on the basis of the religious interpretation. And here the question arises, of course, *which* religion is best (the subject of chapter 3), because there are a variety of religions. I know that we do not yet understand each other; perhaps someone else will continue the point which you made.

**Student:** I think what he's saying is that Nietzsche can reject the interpretation of physics [inaudible] what's real in the world, in saying this is just fictitious; and since it is interpretation of the world it should be rejected. When he then offers later on an

alternative interpretation, and since it's still a human being making this interpretation, Nietzsche could be rejected, his interpretation of the world in a religious sense could be interpretation just as well.

**LS:** Yes, in other words, that's the old difficulty of whether, say, the will to power is not also just one interpretation. Is that what you meant? We have read that; Nietzsche says this, and then he says [inaudible].

**Student:** "So much the better."

**LS:** Yes; not only "so what," but "all the better." In other words, there is no alternative to interpreting.

**Student:** Would it be a fair, simple summary to say that the value of a vision of life depends on the amount of creative work of the viewer, of the man who's projecting this vision, rather than on the truth of the vision? Am I being completely [inaudible]?

**LS:** No, no. Something of this kind is surely a stage in Nietzsche's thought: that truth is not the important point, but something else. Nietzsche says this more than once. A very powerful formulation of this is that he said it was always his wish to look at science from the perspective of art, and at art from the perspective of life. So that art, which is surely not simply theoretical knowledge, is higher than what seems to be, or what at least pretends to be, theoretical knowledge.

**Student:** You concluded your remarks by saying that a world in which the sacredness of the cow is as much a part of it as its brownness would be a world of God or gods. I wish you would explain that.

**LS:** Is it not true that when you speak of the sacred or the holy, you introduce religion by this very fact? From a nonreligious point of view there may be all kinds of value qualities, but not the sacred or the holy. Does this not make sense?

**Student:** You say that Nietzsche rejected the world of physics because [inaudible].

**LS:** Well, rejected is a loose expression; questions it, rather.

**Student:** Because it had no human or humanly interesting qualities in it, could he have said the same thing about the distinction between nature and convention, nature as understood by [inaudible]?

**LS:** Yes, surely he would. That is what I suggested. But that he turns around [inaudible] you know, what traditionally [inaudible] I think last time I made this suggestion as a provisional suggestion. [LS writes on the blackboard] N [not equal to] C; N [not equal to] H: there was nature versus convention at the beginning of philosophy. What we have in modern times (not only in Nietzsche) is a distinction between nature and history. The great difficulty is to understand this transformation of convention into

history. At any rate, the things which were looked down upon by earlier philosophy as conventional and therefore uninteresting became much more important, infinitely more important, in modern times, especially in the nineteenth century, *because* they were no longer interpreted as conventional but in the light of this new concept of history.

Nietzsche means this somehow because, as he says, what distinguishes him from all earlier philosophers is precisely the historical sense. Well, this is one of the sweeping statements which Nietzsche makes; it is easily supplied with footnotes, but it doesn't do away with the fundamental change in orientation which has taken place.

**Student:** I don't quite understand the inversion he has performed, at least with respect to Socrates, simply because, at least in the, a famous passage says that he gave up the investigation of nature . . . [inaudible].

**LS:** Oh, that's simple; that is easy. Socrates turned away from what Anaxagoras and such people did, and he turned to what? What does he call it there?

**Student:** Looking at "appearances," or "reflections."

**LS:** Yes, but (this is of course a similar point) what is the non-metaphoric expression which he uses there? To the *logoi*, to the speeches, literally translated. But what is that which becomes manifest through the *logoi*? The ideas. The ideas are the Platonic interpretation of nature, though you must not impute to Plato the ordinary concept of nature. For Plato, the natures are the ideas. In this respect, there is no difference [between nature and ideas]. Plato denies that the natures are such things as atoms, or elements, or something, but he does not deny that there are natures. Natures are the ideas. That's easy, in a way.

**Student:** Is the point that, insofar as the *logoi* reflect nature or the ideas, that the distinction between nature and convention is a false one; that the dichotomy is [inaudible].

**LS:** How? That would mean that, for example, the difference between Greeks and Persians reaches up into the realm of ideas, according to Plato.

**Student:** It might.

**LS:** No, that is clearly denied. Socrates says, in the very *Phaedo*, that when he is dead then his friends should look, seek other men from whom they can learn some things, Greeks or barbarians.<sup>iii</sup> Greekness is practically very important, that goes without saying, but there is no idea of Greekness.

**Student:** We both agree on that; but doesn't that mean that the older distinction between nature and convention is no longer [inaudible]?

---

<sup>iii</sup> *Phaedo* 78a.

**LS:** It is modified in Plato; but it is not abolished. The *Republic* is the simplest proof of that, when he makes the distinction [inaudible] they are looking for what is by nature just, in contradistinction to what is just by convention. Therefore the abolition of private property, private marriage, and private children follow; it is explicitly said that those things are all by convention. That this is somewhat ironical does not do away with the fact that Plato's concern with the best regime is the concern with the regime which is best according to nature, in contradistinction to what is good according to convention. Conventions differ from society to society, from age to age. This can at best be the starting point; but what he is after is the unchangeable best regime by nature.<sup>2</sup>

**Student:** But he's not unconcerned with the world that concerns us.

**LS:** All right; now you are talking. That is exactly the point: that for Plato, for example (as well as of course for the Bible), the world of concern to us is identical with the true world. That is true; whereas in modern physics or even already perhaps in Democritus and Epicurus, the world of concern to us is not the true world. Why is that so? Why is, according to Plato *and* the Bible, the true world identical with the world of what concerns us? Because the ground of the true world is God—in Plato it is not called God, but it is still something comparable—and therefore, *therefore*, the world of concern to man is identical with the true world. That is true.

**Student:** But then the inversion is not as much in respect to Plato or Christianity, so much as it is with respect to science and modern physics.

**LS:** Sure, that is the primary [inaudible] we will come later on to this when we come to the discussion of religion. Now let us continue, first in chapter 2, after number 34. Read perhaps number 35.

**Reader:** "O Voltaire! O humaneness! . . . I bet he finds nothing."<sup>iv</sup>

**LS:** Here, this is just as an example of how these aphorisms are arranged. There is one word underlined: the *seeking* of the truth. That is the point. Philosophy as seeking truth—meaning as seeking, of course, a given truth; discovering it, in opposition to creating it—belongs to the sphere of good and evil, of morality; and hence the remark about Voltaire. Let us turn to number 36, the beginning [inaudible] only.

**Reader:** "Suppose nothing else were 'given' . . . besides the reality of our drives—"<sup>v</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. You see that the words "given," and "reality," when they first come up, are in quotation marks so that these are intended as very loose [designations]<sup>3</sup> which we must not take too literally. Nietzsche is still speaking of what he had spoken before in number 34, the world of concern to us. The world of concern to us is our world of desires

<sup>iv</sup> *BGE* 35. The reader picks up reading from Kaufmann's translation of *BGE* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966). Kaufmann, 47.

<sup>v</sup> *BGE* 36. Kaufmann, 47.

and passions; it is now understood that these desires and passions are *the* key to everything. This leads, as Nietzsche develops it in the rest of this aphorism, to his doctrine of the will to power.

Here we have, in a way, a solution of Nietzsche's problem: if the world, if the essence of things, is the will to power, then the world in itself is identical with the world of concern to us. To that extent he returns to Plato or the Bible, but in an entirely different way and on an entirely different plane. Nietzsche *is*, I think, concerned with bringing about such a coincidence again of the world of concern to us with the world in itself. Now number 37, which was quoted last time, but let us read it again.

**Reader:** ““What? Doesn't this mean . . . who forces you to speak with the vulgar?””<sup>vi</sup>

**LS:** If we develop this thought, then the harmony between the world in itself and our world, the world of concern to us, is probably, perhaps, the true meaning of God. We will find more evidence for that. Paragraph 38.

**Reader:** “What happened most recently in the broad daylight . . . as a noble posterity might misunderstand the whole past and in that way make it tolerable to look at.””<sup>vii</sup>

**LS:** Perhaps.

**Reader:** “Perhaps tolerable.” [The reader continues with the second paragraph of number 38] “Or rather: isn't this . . . comprehend this, it is all over?”

**LS:** In other words, the text has been overlaid by the interpretation; that has happened all the time. People have taken the interpretation to be the objective truth. But now that we know that—that we never can transcend [inaudible] that whatever we think is an interpretation, that we can never transcend the world of interpretation—we can no longer naively identify our interpretation with the text. This leads to the great difficulty that is ultimately overcome by the insight that the world in itself *is* the world of concern to us, which means that the text (the world in itself) is the world of concern to us (the interpretation). Whether that is a feasible thought or not is a very great question; but that is doubtless what Nietzsche is driving at.

**Student:** [Inaudible question asking LS to repeat his point.]

**LS:** Whether that is feasible, Nietzsche's attempt to identify the world as it is in itself with the world of concern to us. This distinction did not exist in the [inaudible] say, of Plato and of the Bible, but it becomes inevitable from the [inaudible] of modern science. Nietzsche is trying to overcome that.

---

<sup>vi</sup> BGE, 37. Kaufmann, 48.

<sup>vii</sup> BGE 38. Kaufmann, 49.



In number 39, Nietzsche returns to his critique of morality, but from the point of view of the philosopher; he makes clear [inaudible] well, we cannot read these [inaudible] beautiful statements, especially in number 40. Truthfulness is intellectual probity, yet precisely as such it requires a mask, a deceptive surface—nay, it necessarily produces a deceptive surface. He turns [inaudible] the subject is still here the new philosophy of the future, the new kind of philosopher [at] the beginning of number 42. One point which he emphasizes especially in number 43: for these new philosophers, the truth will no longer be of universal validity because of the realization of the radical inequality among men. A truth of any importance will not be the same for all. Nietzsche speaks in the last paragraph of the free mind, the free thinkers, and distinguishes them from the free thinkers of the nineteenth century as they were usually understood. As their characteristic, he describes the ordinary free thinker in number 44: “They see in the forms of the old society, as it has hitherto been, the cause for just about all human misery.” Do you have that? It is at the end of the first third, about, of paragraph 44.

**Reader:** “about *all* human misery and failure—which is a way of standing truth happily upon her head.”<sup>viii</sup>

**LS:** So, in other words, Nietzsche does not [inaudible] that is the most obvious and crude distinction between Nietzsche and most of his contemporaries. We turn now to chapter 3. The title of that is hard to translate; he translates it how?

**Student:** Just “What Is Religious,” and fusses over *Wesen* being most often rendered essence and in many contexts [as] being, even a natural being.

**LS:** Yes. The German original says “*Das religiöse Wesen*,” and this has an ambiguity which cannot well be rendered in English, as far as I can see. *Wesen* is used in German, for example, for essence. There was a predecessor of Nietzsche, Feuerbach, who wrote a book called *Das Wesen der Religion*, *The Essence of Religion*.<sup>ix</sup> In his title, Nietzsche wishes to make clear that he will not speak of the essence of religion in that sense. *Wesen* in German can be attributed, for example, to a man, or for that matter to a woman, as in: He or she has a charming *Wesen*, a charming being. It can approach the meaning of doings, goings-on. It is akin in breadth to the Greek word *ousia*, which may mean both the being here and now, and the essence. Nietzsche has interpreted the title in a very nasty way in number 47, shortly after the middle, where he says: “The religious neurosis, or as I call it, *das religiöse Wesen*.”<sup>x</sup> In other words, Nietzsche has nothing against [inaudible] is perfectly willing to accept for some time saying “the religious neurosis”; he knows quite well that this will not suffice. Now let us begin with paragraph 45. Let us read only the first sentence.

**Reader:** “The human soul and its limits . . . psychologist and lover of the ‘great hunt.’”<sup>xi</sup>

<sup>viii</sup> BGE 44. Kaufmann, 54.

<sup>ix</sup> Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach (b. 1804), German philosopher and one of the most notable Left Hegelians. *The Essence of Religion* appeared in 1846 (2d. ed. 1849).

<sup>x</sup> Apparently Strauss’s translation.

<sup>xi</sup> BGE 45. Kaufmann, 59.

**LS:** Let us stop here. Here we see in the first [inaudible] the human soul and its limits. So there seem to be limits to the human soul. This is questioned, or apparently questioned, in the sequel: “the extent of inner human experiences which has *hitherto* been reached.” In other words, we cannot know what inner experiences there will be in the future. The soul itself is, for practical purposes, infinite. And the understanding of the soul as it has developed hitherto, even that understanding for practical purposes, is infinite. You see, he speaks here of “inner experiences of men,” meaning nothing supernatural, nothing superhuman. That is the starting point. He doesn’t speak here yet of religion; he speaks of the history of the human soul. Nevertheless, he must mean something by making this general remark about the history of the human soul in the first chapter of the section on religion. One could suggest that for Nietzsche the best clue to the history of the soul is the history of religion. That would be just the opposite, one could say, of the Marxist interpretation of history, wherein religion would be understood as a part of the superstructure—i.e., for Nietzsche it has to be understood in the light of the infrastructure. Then, after he has made clear what an important and exciting subject of study that is, he comes to the conclusion. Well, read perhaps the next two sentences.

**Reader:** “But how often he has to say . . . to round up *his* game.”

**LS:** But this is hopeless, for the reason which he [inaudible] will you read on: “For instance, in order to divine and establish what kind of history.”

**Reader:** “what kind of a history the problem . . . swarm of dangerous and painful experiences.”<sup>xii</sup>

**LS:** In other words, a history of religion is for all practical purposes impossible because these conditions are very unlikely to be fulfilled: that he should have the depth of Pascal, that he know these experiences through his *own* experiences, and that he should at the same time have an intellectual freedom which, from Nietzsche’s point of view, Pascal lacked. I think it is a healthy suggestion, not only regarding history of religion but regarding all forms of interesting history, that it is wiser to reckon with the possibility that they are impossible than to believe they are of course possible. Now, in paragraph 46, he turns to Christianity (to which he had already turned while speaking of Pascal, of course), and especially of faith as it was demanded and frequently achieved by original Christianity. He distinguishes that from the faith as understood or experienced by people like Luther, Cromwell, and other “Nordic barbarians of the spirit,” as he calls them. Can you go on where he had spoken [inaudible]?

**Reader:** “It is much closer to the faith of Pascal . . . and with a single stroke.”

**LS:** That refers to an utterance of Pascal himself. I have here noted it: “This will make you believe and will . . .”—*abêtira, vous abêtira*.

---

<sup>xii</sup> BGE 45. Kaufmann, 59.

**Student:** “Beat you down.”

**LS:** No, no; the word is from *bête*; it would mean “will make you like an animal,” [or] like a brute.

**Student:** Brutalize.

**LS:** Yes, but not in the sense of brutalize when you think today of police brutality. It means something else: in a way, make stupid, stupefy. All right. In other words, faith in early Christianity meant the sacrifice of the intellect; it meant the most radical sacrifice, and therefore something like cruelty. Nietzsche tries to trace it back to its root, the desire for revenge on the part of the oriental slave [inaudible]. The next number, 47, still deals with Christianity in fact, but explicitly with what he calls “the religious neurosis” in general. One passage is perhaps most revealing of Nietzsche’s psychology: at the end, where he says, “If one asks oneself what precisely.”

**Reader:** “Let us ask what precisely about this whole phenomenon . . . A lack of philology?”<sup>xiii</sup>

**LS:** In other words, Nietzsche raises here the question of why the saint had such a great attraction for men in general, and for philosophers in particular. With respect to the philosopher, he thinks in the first place of Schopenhauer, who had concluded, in a way, his work with a discussion of the saint. Nietzsche has in mind here something which is known on a level lower than that of saints proper: that of repentance, the radical change in the character of a man. Nietzsche opposes this view that there is such a sudden change from sinner to saint by saying that there is no opposition of values—we have already heard this from him before—but that both states of the soul, that of the *sinner* and of the saint, are modifications of the will to power. In other words, they have the same root [inaudible] to be understood accordingly. Paragraph 48, just as some earlier and later paragraphs, deals with the difference between Protestantism and Catholicism. We can perhaps read the beginning of paragraph 48.

**Reader:** “It seems that Catholicism . . . we have *little* talent for it.”<sup>xiv</sup>

**LS:** And so on. He contrasts, then gives as a contemporary example, a statement by Renan, the famous French historian of religion and at the same time a man who claimed to have a special understanding of the religious life.<sup>xv</sup> Nietzsche quotes a passage which he finds unbearable, and minimizes his criticism by saying that he belongs to these Nordic, religiously ungifted people. Then he suddenly turns, in number 49, to the Greeks as radically different from the Christians and of course also from the Jews. Now, read that, please.

---

<sup>xiii</sup> *BGE* 47. Kaufmann, 62.

<sup>xiv</sup> *BGE* 48. Kaufmann, 62-63.

<sup>xv</sup> Ernest Renan (b. 1823), a French philosopher and writer against whom Nietzsche inveighs more than once. Cf. *Genealogy of Morals* III. 26; *Antichrist* 17, 29, 31-2; *Twilight of the Idols* (“Skirmishes of an Untimely Man”) 2, 6.

**Reader:** “What is amazing . . . the ground was prepared for Christianity.”<sup>xvi</sup>

**LS:** In other words, contrary to the very common notion that *the* root of religion is fear (the view of Lucretius and innumerable other writers), Nietzsche sees the possibility of another motivation of religion: gratitude. Fear is of course a very narrow basis for understanding Christianity, and any other religion, for that matter. What Nietzsche has in mind, and what would appear if you would read [inaudible] the quotation from Renan in the preceding number, is that fear and wishes belong together as opposed to with gratitude. Gratitude is satisfaction with how one is. And that, he finds, is peculiarly characteristic of the Greeks in contradistinction to the Christians. Number 50 deals again with the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism. And in 51 he tries to explain what he had alluded to before, namely, the peculiar attraction of the saint: how it happened that such people as these northern barbarians, for example, bowed to the saints. Let us read number 51.

**Reader:** “So far the most powerful . . . stop before the saint. They had to ask him—”<sup>xvii</sup>

**LS:** In other words, the saint is superior to these warriors, because the saint has a will to power superior, more spiritual, than theirs. Religion—this is Nietzsche’s claim—can and must be understood in light of the universal phenomenon of the will to power. The question is whether Nietzsche has succeeded in that. Now this leads Nietzsche quite naturally to the Old Testament in contradistinction to the New Testament. Let us read the first sentence.

**Reader:** “In the Jewish ‘Old Testament’ . . . nothing to compare with it.”<sup>xviii</sup>

**LS:** The important point is the Greek literature here. When Nietzsche says in his letters occasionally that we must overcome even the Greeks, who seem to be *the* people, then he thinks of the fact that in one way or another the biblical tradition has given Western man—and Nietzsche in particular—certain needs of the soul which can no longer be fulfilled by anything belonging to classical antiquity. This is one indication of that here. But the high praise of the Old Testament, connected with the derogatory remarks about the New Testament, is not Nietzsche’s last word on this subject. That is a long story. In a posthumous remark, he calls the superman “Caesar with the soul of Christ.” In other words, there is again a synthesis of classical antiquity and the Bible. Just as in another form Hegel’s doctrine was such a synthesis.

**Student:** In regard to paragraph 51, if the saint denies nature, denies life, I don’t understand how that [inaudible] can be a manifestation of the will to power, which is also a sign of life. In other words, one gets the impression that there are two strains: one is a combination of Christianity and the saint as denying life, as opposing nature; the other is

---

<sup>xvi</sup> BGE 49. Kaufmann, 64.

<sup>xvii</sup> BGE 51. Kaufmann, 65.

<sup>xviii</sup> BGE 52. Kaufmann, 65.

that he feels a kind of sympathy for it, because after all it is a manifestation of the will to power. Perhaps it's a higher form of life.

**LS:** You say the saint denies life; therefore he denies the will to power, if life is the will to power. But could this very act of denying the will to power not be a manifestation of the will to power? This was, perhaps, from Nietzsche's point of view, the fundamental error of Schopenhauer, who believed that it is possible to understand the denial of the will to life as something which is not itself a manifestation of the will to life. Is this not possible? That is what he means.

Up to number 52, he had spoken of religion. Now he begins to raise the question of religion in the future. Number 53 begins as follows: "Why atheism today?" The "today" must also be emphasized. Today it is inevitable; but in the future, one doesn't know. Why is atheism today—let us read that—why is atheism necessary? I think one can read these things without any feeling of shock or shocking after we have seen that there are theologians today who speak of the death of God. At this moment in time, Nietzsche has lost much of his shocking quality. Let us read that.

**Reader:** "Why atheism today? . . . it refuses with deep suspicion."<sup>xix</sup>

**LS:** In other words, atheism as Nietzsche sees it is not simply anti-religious (well, on its vulgar levels it may very well be simply anti-religious, but that would not be interesting) but anti-theistic. The gravest objection is here barely recognizable: God seems to be incapable of communicating himself clearly, lucidly: "Is he unclear?" One would have to do some study of the discussions throughout the centuries in order to find out what Nietzsche means by that. Now let us read number 55.<sup>4</sup> Modern philosophy prepared a non-Christian religion, he indicates in 54. It is anti-Christian, but it is not anti-religious. But this is much less interesting, or intelligible, as number 55 [suggests].

**Reader:** "There is a great ladder . . . one's own strongest instincts, one's 'nature'—"

**LS:** "Nature" is in quotation marks here, as you see.

**Reader:** "*this* festive joy lights up . . . all of us already know something of this."<sup>xx</sup>

**LS:** In other words, that is the first aspect of this new atheistic religion. Without knowing it, it is a modification of what Nietzsche calls here "religious cruelty": the will to sacrifice what is dearest, highest for one. The average atheist does not know that he sacrifices God for nothing; but this is what he in fact does, according to Nietzsche. A value-free, meaningless world: that is what Nietzsche means by the "nothing." Let us read only one more paragraph, because of the lack of time, paragraph 60, where Nietzsche makes clear his connection with religion of the past, and, at the same time, why he does not simply continue this religion.

---

<sup>xix</sup> BGE 53. Kaufmann, 66.

<sup>xx</sup> BGE 55. Kaufmann, 67.

**Reader:** “To love man *for God’s sake* . . . and gone astray most beautifully!”<sup>xxi</sup>

**LS:** The implication of that is that this is not the Greek religion, but the biblical religion. The ordinary atheism of the nineteenth century (and of the twentieth century, too) is humanism; that means to love man, period, without any “sanctifying afterthought,” if that is a proper translation of this German expression. Nietzsche regards that as an unbearable thought: just to love man as he is, and because he is what he is. That would be, as he put it, a “stupidity.” Now that is in full agreement with what Socrates occasionally indicates when he [inaudible] the Greeks had a word for what we call “humanity,” namely, *philanthrōpia*, from which our [word] philanthropy is derived: loving human beings. Well, there are some human beings who love human beings; other human beings love dogs, other human beings love cats. There is nothing [inaudible] why should one do that? There must be some ground for it. According to Nietzsche, the highest ground which was ever found was to say that man and man alone is created in the image of God, and *therefore* he deserves to be loved. Is there any other point which you would like to raise?

**Student:** Would you say a bit more about how Socrates and Nietzsche agree on this point?

**LS:** They agree that philanthropy as such is not manifestly the highest virtue or even a very high virtue. It is, as a rule, a nice trait, but this doesn’t make it a very high virtue; there must be something more to that. When we speak of humanity, we mean something more than the fact that just as dogs are generally speaking attracted by dogs, human beings are generally speaking attracted by human beings, loosely speaking—especially when you come to an uninhabited island, where you will notice this more than in Chicago, you know? Is there not a radical difference between man’s concern with man and, say, a dog’s concern with dogs? Would such a concern with man that is comparable to dogs’ concern with dogs not fall short of what we divine, in our better moments, humanity to be? That’s the question which he raises.

**Student:** I’m not sure I understand the connection between this last point about humanism and our earlier conversation about pessimism. We said that life is inseparable from evil, that there’s always some evil in life, yet Nietzsche says, “yes” to suffering in human life. Well, how does that differ from saying love man as man [inaudible]?

**LS:** Yes, that is a very good question. But even if Nietzsche would contradict himself, one would first have to see whether this contradiction is not preferable to accepting only one horn of the dilemma and forgetting about the other. That is sometimes necessary. Now, that saying yes to life means also saying yes to the [inaudible] cripples and fragments of humanity (you remember the passage in the *Zarathustra*?) that is clear. But is it not also true that Nietzsche dreams of some human possibility which surpasses everything which man has been hitherto, what he calls the superman?

---

<sup>xxi</sup> BGE 60. Kaufmann, 72.

**Student:** Then would his saying “yes” to man because of the hope for the superman be analogous to loving man for the sake of God?

**LS:** In a way, yes. I indicated this at the beginning when I said that one cannot read Nietzsche’s expression “superman” without remembering the fact that the adjective superhuman was very common long before Nietzsche. Sure, the superman is a kind of substitute for God, as Zarathustra says almost explicitly when he says, “God is dead; let us now create superman.” But your question is very good, and don’t forget it for the sequel. Now, I think we have to leave it [inaudible].

[end of session]

---

<sup>1</sup> Changed from “on the contrary.”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “changeable by nature.”

<sup>3</sup> Changed from “indications.”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “because Nietzsche gives now in 55—54 it is already; I’m sorry.”

## Session 7: no date

**Leo Strauss**<sup>i</sup>: [Inaudible] it was very good that you reminded us of this aspect of Nietzsche. But there are certain difficulties which [inaudible] to have considered: whether there is a Nietzschean teaching, for example, or whether it is Zarathustra's teaching. The will to power: Is this meant to be merely Zarathustra's or Nietzsche's teaching, or does it not also claim to be true in the way in which the teaching of earlier philosophers were meant to be true?

**Student**: [Inaudible] to the individual, or if he does set forth certain absolute teachings, as traditionally has been done. Is that what you're asking me, whether he presents a positive philosophy?

**LS**: One would have to know what "absolute" means.

**Student**: Well, but you're asking me whether Nietzsche does present a positive philosophy?

**LS**: Yes, whether there is not a teaching there.

**Student**: I certainly believe that he does present a definite teaching, but I think it is always with the implication that the individual, and the individual's probing, are the key to the teaching that he is presenting. In other words, what he is basically telling us—whether it is in the will to power, or in the concept of the *Übermensch*, or in the death of God—is that now man must stand on his own feet, create his own values, you know, become his own referent, and place his center of gravity within himself. In other words, there's a duality in the sense that it is a positive teaching but also it does not take the responsibility away from the individual.

**LS**: But was this responsibility taken away by, say, Plato's teaching? Is this possible, according to Plato himself: simply to take cognizance of Socrates' [words], say, and then accept it? Is not Plato forcing you all the time to wonder whether Socrates is right and therefore whether it is wise to follow him? What's the difference between that and Nietzsche?

**Student**: Well, I certainly agree with that, especially, for example, in the case of Socrates, whom of course Nietzsche regarded rather highly [inaudible].

**LS**: He regarded him, mostly, *not* highly. In one sense, yes, as a [inaudible], but he rejected him very strongly.

---

<sup>i</sup> Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the start of the session. The reading was not recorded.



**Student:** But I think he agrees with his [inaudible] he calls Socrates the Pied Piper of Athens<sup>ii</sup>—you know, regarding the gadfly about [inaudible] and he terms himself also a Pied Piper,<sup>iii</sup> and also a gadfly, so [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, but what's the difference between Nietzsche and Socrates? Is Nietzsche simply the Socrates of the nineteenth century? No, honestly.

**Student:** No. But, well, I think methodologically, in how he tried to approach problems, this is where the kinship between Nietzsche and Socrates is, in the sense that they're "problem-thinkers" rather than "system-thinkers;" they constantly probe, and they ask individuals to bring the answer out of themselves rather than merely giving the answer to the individual.

**LS:** But still you admit there is also a difference?

**Student:** Oh, certainly.

**LS:** And what is that difference?

**Student:** Well, I don't know Socrates that well, so I get hung up here, but [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, well, what you suggest is indeed something that is now called the existentialist interpretation of Nietzsche. But you yourself indicated that this is not a Nietzschean term. So that stems from another part of the globe. What did Nietzsche call it, what you call existential? After all, usually people, especially great men, find the proper word for what they are doing. This word "existential," in the way in which it is used now, was coined in German on the basis of the combined effects of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard—without Kierkegaard, there wouldn't be a synthesis—and Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, as you know, took opposite positions regarding Christianity, which is the key point. Nietzsche speaks of life, not of existence, and this has grave implications.

**Student:** I didn't mean to imply that Nietzsche had used the term existential [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, but what do you understand by it? Because I suppose there is a variety of opinions [inaudible].

**Student:** By existential, I mean [inaudible] for example, when I drew the comparison, say, between Descartes and Nietzsche, I tried to show that when Nietzsche came to the realization that God is dead, so to speak, he did not come to that realization through some type of philosophical rigor or logical consistency. He does not begin with a premise and then try to find out if in point of fact God exists or does not exist. In other words, Descartes would say, "I think, therefore I am"; then, through the ontological argument, he

---

<sup>ii</sup> *Gay Science* 340.

<sup>iii</sup> *Twilight of the Idols*, Preface. *Portable Nietzsche*, 466.

posits the fact that God exists, because the fact that I have an idea of God necessitates the fact that God exists. Nietzsche doesn't work this way.

**LS:** Well, why is Nietzsche an atheist then, to the extent to which he is an atheist?

**Student:** Well, he's an atheist [inaudible] I think William James says someplace that, you know, conviction is very largely a matter of taste; and I think Nietzsche rejects the Christian God, the Christian tradition. He's not making an ontological statement concerning the deity; I don't think that's his primary concern. His primary concern is with the Christian tradition, and what effect Christian tradition, Christian morality, and the Christian God have had upon man. As a matter of taste, he rejects them. But his atheism, then, comes not from, let's say, a rigorous metaphysical inquiry, but from just a cultural lack of taste for, or lack of sympathy with this God.

**LS:** In other words, what you ascribe to Nietzsche is high-class journalism. You used the expression the "new cultural reality": he has seen that the power of Christianity has receded in Europe.

**Student:** No, well . . . .

**LS:** Do you not mean that, or what else do you mean?

**Student:** I don't want to base his rejection of Christianity on the fact that it's receding. Basically, his statements against Christianity stem from the fact that the values which Christianity imposes are not beneficial to man. Whether Christianity is on the ascent or the decline, I don't think would change Nietzsche's point there.

**LS:** But is this not, then, a theoretical argument—namely, that there are certain things which are good for man, which in turn implies a certain notion of what man is and what is good for man, of course, and that measured by that standard Christianity falls short.

**Student:** Right.

**LS:** If this is not a theoretical argument, what is it?

**Student:** Well, it's theoretical, but it's not metaphysical. In other words, generally, when you think of God and his existence or non-existence, traditionally they would get at it ontologically or metaphysically.

**LS:** Who? The philosophers?

**Student:** Right.

**LS:** But not the believers.

**Student:** Well, I don't know; would you consider Thomas Aquinas a believer or a philosopher? How can you [inaudible]?

**LS:** Both. But *qua* believer, he did not need the *Summa* in order to believe. Nevertheless, I was quite satisfied with your paper because I was wondering how anyone could read<sup>iv</sup> a paper on chapter 4. You did it quite well by general reflections on the form of the epigram. That is something to which we surely have to give thought. But one must also state one point, to take what you did seriously, very seriously: there would be no objection in principle to what you said but for the fact that Nietzsche also wrote non-epigrammatic utterances. Do you admit that? I believe one could show it, even limiting ourselves to the book we are reading now, *Beyond Good and Evil*: there is only one chapter which has this character. Therefore the question would be: Why does he do it here? Because what you say about the other chapters too being epigrammatic is not literally true, you know; some of the pieces are much longer, and in the *Genealogy of Morals* we have developed essays. So this will not do. But someone raised his hand.

**Student:** Back to the original question you asked: Would a possible answer be that Nietzsche posits no final end which is true of all men, but a certain set of qualities which all men have, and each in an individual way should fulfill? In that way there could be said to be the radical individual, although he does see certain things as true.

**LS:** But the point is this. All right, you can answer that: radical individualism. But Nietzsche combines this with something with which not all radical individualists combine it, namely, with distinguishing between higher and lower individuals, so that, say, the virtues of a nincompoop (and there are nincompoops) would be different not only from those of another nincompoop (assuming that they could be radical individuals) but especially from those of higher, superior men. He must have then a standard for distinguishing between higher and lower. Nietzsche has it, and it has to do with the will to power. Without it, one omits—one cuts out, in a way, the life[blood] of Nietzsche. Of course one can say this, and this is the justification for the position taken by Mr. [student]. This will to power business is very incredible, as well as other things, like the eternal return; but there is something in Nietzsche which cannot help but make a deep impression on us. Let us forget about this relapse of Nietzsche into something like metaphysics and let us be concerned with what is not questionable even from his own point of view. This is fundamentally what you tried to do. One can do that, but the question is whether it is a mere accident that Nietzsche (a) relapses into metaphysics, and (b) created this particular kind of metaphysics, namely, the will to power.

**Student:** What I'm trying to say is that the will to power is that which Nietzsche posits, like the older style metaphysician does, as the truth. Does that mean that all these men who fulfill their will to power, become overmen [inaudible] that each man as a superman will be different from any other man?

---

<sup>iv</sup> i.e., present a paper.

**LS:** Yes, that would seem [inaudible] was implied by Nietzsche; otherwise there wouldn't be true selves, true individuals.

**Student:** In that way, can't you reconcile a vision of something as true, the will to power, with there being no one final end for all men?

**LS:** No, it would only mean that the end, or whatever you call it, can only have a formal character, and has to be filled out by each individual. That could be; but a formal ethics is still a general teaching.

**Student:** Getting back to another point: to prove by theoretical argument that something is bad is surely not to prove that it doesn't exist. Just what is the character, then, of the argument which indicates that God does not exist? Isn't it just a cultural/historical argument that [inaudible]?

**LS:** Yes, well, this in itself any believer would just laugh at it, don't you think? He would simply say: What does it mean, except that people have become more presumptuous, more foolish than they were in former times? "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God"<sup>v</sup>—that's what the Bible says. That creates great practical problems—I mean, for the religious organization man if I may say so, but it is not in itself an impressive thing. There are periods of very widespread disbelief, perhaps not so much in the masses of men as we have it now, but for example in the eighteenth century, in the upper-class of France. What has this to do with it? It has nothing to do with the truth or untruth. But Nietzsche gives arguments, and he indicates them [inaudible] we read this chapter "Why atheism today?" (You remember that, in the third part, "On Religion"; we read that.) That of course needs a long interpretation, and if one is wholly unfamiliar with the issues as they existed throughout the ages, one may even find what Nietzsche says plain silly. But if one knows the issues, one recognizes them in Nietzsche's somewhat light-hearted statement.

Now there is another very striking point that Nietzsche makes, and which of course addresses itself as such only to people who do no longer believe. According to Nietzsche's diagnosis—and this was a new thing, in this form—what you find among the atheists or unbelievers in Europe was rejection of biblical faith but preservation of biblical morality, whether in the form of an ethics of compassion or in any other form. This is a point which Nietzsche raises; he says you cannot accept a biblical morality after you have abandoned the biblical God. And this had an enormous impact, this simple reasoning. This leads then to the political stand which Nietzsche takes, which is a rather definite one: he is opposed to democracy, he is opposed to socialism; he has another view of the good life, both of the individual and society. The ground is that after the Christian God is no longer believed in, the Christian morality can no longer be accepted; and therefore there must be a new morality in which compassion plays, to put it mildly, a very subordinate role. That is one argument; there are others.

---

<sup>v</sup> Psalm 14:1.

**Student:** This is on a different subject. On aphorism 116, Zimmern says “to rebaptize our badness as the best that is in us”; and Kaufmann says “our evil.” And Nietzsche distinguishes between what is bad and what is evil [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, quite right. “Our *evil* into our best.” You are quite right; but on the other hand, one must say that Nietzsche is not pedantic. In some connections, it may be simply [inaudible] no. What is the difference between *böse* and *schlecht* here, or altogether?

**Student:** *Böse* is evil, and *schlecht* is bad? I’m not familiar with German.

**LS:** Yes. In other words, evil does not have the implication of being contemptible; the bad is the contemptible. Nietzsche doesn’t say that we should change our [inaudible] the contemptible [inaudible]; but general rule: Nietzsche is not a pedantic writer. He uses the terms in their ordinary meaning and leaves it to the reader that has such a concern with conceptual orderliness to do the translation himself, provided the message comes across.

**Student:** The English translation of this chapter is “Epigrams and Interludes.” You spoke about epigrams; I wonder why he chose the word “Interludes.” And, as a general question, why did he put this chapter here?

**LS:** Yes, that’s a good question. Perhaps the “interlude” refers to [? where it is, in-between].<sup>vi</sup> That is the question with which I would start: Why this chapter here? *I* do not claim to have understood every epigram here and to be able to interpret it; but let us only try, to the extent [that] I, for example, can understand it. Perhaps you can help me a bit. Now, why here? That’s to say, what preceded it and what follows it? What preceded it?

**Student:** Religion.

**LS:** And?

**Student:** The free spirits; the prejudices of the philosophers. Well, all right, two great themes: philosophy and religion. What follows it, if you look at the titles [inaudible].

**Student:** Natural history of morality; scholars; and virtues in the narrow, specific sense.

**LS:** At any rate, I think we can say they all deal with morality, because even “We Scholars” deals with the virtue of probity. In other words, the preceding chapters deal with what surpasses man or comprises man: God or the whole. And the following deal with morality—that is to say, with man.

**Student:** What about “The Free Spirit,” the second chapter?

---

<sup>vi</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

**LS:** This is only an elaboration of the philosophy chapter, as we have seen. Now, chapter 4 marks the distinction between these two parts; we can say it prepares the transition to morality proper and/or it summarizes the results of the first three chapters, meaning, leading the [discussion]<sup>1</sup> to a higher point. One could suggest that prior to reading these statements; one must then see whether this can be confirmed. Let us read a few, and see whether we can understand it. Number 63.

**Reader:** “Whoever is a teacher through and through takes all things seriously only in relation to his students—even himself.”<sup>vii</sup>

**LS:** Is this intelligible? And what does Nietzsche wish to convey by it? Does he say one should be a teacher through and through? No, the opposite: if you want to be truly yourself you must not be a teacher *von Grund auf*, through and through. Now the next one.

**Reader:** “‘Knowledge for its own sake’—that is the last snare of morality: with that one becomes completely entangled in it once more.”<sup>viii</sup>

**LS:** Here again, knowledge for its “self sake,” literally translated. One must be concerned with knowledge not for knowledge’s sake, but for the sake of oneself. Does this make sense? Now let us see.

**Student:** Could I ask you a question on the second one? When he says “one becomes ensnared in *it* once again,” does the “*it*” refer to knowledge or morality?

**LS:** To morality. Now [inaudible].

**Reader:** “The attraction of knowledge would be small if one did not have to overcome so much shame on the way.”<sup>ix</sup>

**LS:** What does this mean here? I do not believe that there is necessarily a connection, a direct connection, between two succeeding epigrams; but one must at least try. For Nietzsche knowledge means here self-knowledge, a way towards the true self, otherwise the epigram wouldn’t make sense. The true self does not simply proceed from knowledge of it—on the contrary, you have to overcome shame in order to know yourself or, for that matter, to know man as man. You remember what he said about the ape, the monkey, as man’s original, at the beginning of the *Zarathustra*? He is for man an object of laughter and an object of painful shame. Truth, the concern with truth, truthfulness, probity, are in a conflict with a sense of shame. Does it not make sense, I mean on the most everyday level and on deeper levels? If you want to be honest with yourself, you have to admit to yourself things of which you are ashamed, everyday experiences [that go]<sup>2</sup> deeper. If you want to see man as man clearly and if you have to admit—as Nietzsche thought he had to

---

<sup>vii</sup> BGE 63. Kaufmann, 79.

<sup>viii</sup> BGE 64. Kaufmann, 79.

<sup>ix</sup> BGE 65. Kaufmann, 79.

admit—that man’s origin is the monkey, then that’s something very terrible for man, who thinks of himself highly.

In the *Zarathustra*, man is called the “beast with red cheeks”—and he wasn’t thinking of course of Irish Setters and such because they have only red hair, not red cheeks. In other words, man is the beast with a sense of shame. Nietzsche means by this the overcoming of the mere beast up to a certain point in man, even while this beast is still in man. If man does not fool himself, if he has self-knowledge, he becomes aware of that. Man has a low past, low origins. Yet there is a difficulty here which we have to keep in mind if we want to understand the sequel: there is also, as we have seen in number 40, the demand of probity counteracting the sense of shame. And thirdly<sup>3</sup>, there is the need for a mask, for respect for the mask, the surface. This is something which also counteracts probity, because probity demands the unmasking.

**Student:** I don’t understand the conflict too well. If one is aware that sometimes one uses the mask, or if one is aware that sometimes one is shamed, this isn’t a conflict with probity.

**LS:** We are not speaking now about speaking to others about one’s defect, but only what we do . . . .

**Student:** To ourselves.

**LS:** . . . in ourselves, yes. Let me see; there are quite a few epigrams which deal with that. Let us wait, and repeat it later on. Now, read the next one, which has the number 65a; I do not know whether this was in Nietzsche’s original version as he published it, or whether that was added from his *Nachlass*.<sup>x</sup> At any rate, let us read it again.

**Reader:** “One is most dishonest to one’s god; he is not *allowed* to sin.”<sup>xi</sup>

**LS:** The greatest test of intellectual probity concerns not one’s empirical self; it is relatively simple to grant that we all have all kinds of defects, although we might not wish to speak about them to others. Rather, the greatest test of intellectual probity concerns one’s ideal, one’s God. Intellectual probity demands that one uncover the nakedness of one’s God, and yet this is the hardest demand on man yet. Number 66.

**Reader:** “The inclination to depreciate himself, to let himself be robbed, lied, to, and taken advantage of, could be the modesty of a god among men.”<sup>xii</sup>

**LS:** The term is “sense of shame,” when [the translator]<sup>4</sup> says “modesty.” He hasn’t understood that the sense of shame is one of the major themes of this part. The god himself might have a sense of shame; he might wish to conceal his divinity. By revealing

---

<sup>x</sup> See Kaufmann, 79 n. 1.

<sup>xi</sup> *BGE* 65a. Kaufmann, 79.

<sup>xii</sup> *BGE* 66. Kaufmann, 79.

his divinity, he would be the sole object of love, with all men's heart, their soul, and their might; and therefore: number 67.

**Reader:** "Love of *one* is a barbarism; for it is exercise at the expense of others. The love of God, too."<sup>xiii</sup>

**LS:** So there is a clear connection between these two epigrams. Yes.

**Reader:** "I have done that, says my memory, 'I cannot have done that,' says my pride, and remains inexorable. Eventually—memory yields."<sup>xiv</sup>

**LS:** To what extent is this of help to you? To what extent does this epigram here help you to understand what Nietzsche means?

**Student:** Well, my question would be meaningless if one's pride would get in the way of recognizing that. In other words, I was considering a person who does have shame, but recognizes it.

**LS:** Yes, but is there not a connection between shame and pride as understood here? You are ashamed of doing it in such a way that you cannot believe you have done it, or have felt it.

**Student:** Yes, if your pride interferes in that way.

**LS:** Yes, but there is perhaps a connection to that. Here, this is easy to understand, but it is not quite clear what Nietzsche means. Is this hypocrisy, as we might call it, is this simply bad? Could it not be conducive to our improvement, that we regard ourselves as utterly incapable of something which we have done? This is another point. Now, let us read a few more.

**Student:** Why does that allow us to improve ourselves?

**LS:** Because you think that it is utterly impossible for you to do it.

**Student:** Is this after you have done it?

**LS:** You have pushed it aside; your memory has been good to you and has given in. There is a certain improving element in hypocrisy, or there *can* be. There is an old saying that hypocrisy is a bow which vice makes to virtue. It is a certain recognition of virtue, which is the first step toward becoming virtuous. Now, the next one.

**Reader:** "One has watched life badly if one has not also seen the hand that considerately—kills."<sup>xv</sup>

---

<sup>xiii</sup> BGE 67. Kaufmann, 79.

<sup>xiv</sup> BGE 68. Kaufmann, 80.



**LS:** Consideration, *Schonung*. What is that in English?

**Student:** Mercifully?

**LS:** Not quite. Sparingly?

**Student:** “Conveniently” is what Zimmern has.

**LS:** Perhaps. At any rate, there is a connection between what is meant here by the word here translated as “consideration” and the sense of shame. Not brutally killing, but delicately. That is better: delicately killing. Now, the next few aphorisms have a common theme, as you can see. Let us just read the next five.

**Reader:** “If one has character . . . A man with spirit—”<sup>xvi</sup>

**LS:** With genius.

**Reader:** “with genius is unbearable . . . gratitude and cleanliness.”<sup>xvii</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. So the theme is the self, self-overcoming. Hence the various rankings of men and the important distinction here, implicitly made, between the “high man” in number 72 and the “man of genius.” The man of genius is by no means necessarily a high man, because he may lack gratitude and cleanliness. The next one is one of the most well-known and well-exploited statements of Nietzsche.

**Reader:** “The degree and kind of a man’s sexuality reach up into the ultimate pinnacle of his spirit.”<sup>xviii</sup>

**LS:** In other words, what is low is effective in the highest, a point which we have seen frequently in the *Zarathustra*. Now, let us read number 80.

**Reader:** “A matter that becomes clear ceases to concern us.— What was on the mind of the god who counseled: ‘Know thyself!’ Did he mean: ‘Cease to concern yourself! Become objective!’—And Socrates:—And ‘scientific men’?—”<sup>xix</sup>

**LS:** What does this mean? A subject, a thing which has been cleared up, ceases to be of concern to us. What would be the consequence of completed self-knowledge, if that could be actual? We would be of no concern to us anymore; and therefore what’s the consequence? We should not have complete self-knowledge. Can this be demanded, that

---

<sup>xv</sup> BGE 69. Kaufmann, 80.

<sup>xvi</sup> BGE 70-74. Kaufmann, 80.

<sup>xvii</sup> BGE 74. Kaufmann, 80.

<sup>xviii</sup> BGE 75. Kaufmann, 81.

<sup>xix</sup> BGE 80. Kaufmann, 81.

we should stop in our search for knowing ourselves? Or what does Nietzsche mean by that? Well, we have read something here . . . yes?

**Student:** Stopping in the search would be ceasing to be concerned with oneself even before having complete self-knowledge.

**LS:** Yes, but still, what is the way out? We must aim at a state in which we are of no concern to us anymore; is this what Nietzsche means?

**Student:** No danger of our ever getting there.

**LS:** Exactly. Why? To quote Nietzsche, “*adventavit asinus*.” In other words, the deepest in us, that which makes us prefer this to that and so on, is no longer susceptible of being brought to light. We have seen this in the first chapter, and we see it also in the ninth again. Then there is a theme which comes up from time to time: 84 to 86 . . . .

**Student:** I’d like to ask a question about number 80. If it is not possible that we will ever get complete knowledge of ourselves and therefore cease to matter to ourselves, then why does Nietzsche bother to talk about this? No one will say, I don’t think, that we can know ourselves completely.

**LS:** Well, he does not agree with the Delphic god. To some extent he does; but there is no hope for full clarification.

**Student:** If it is empirically true that we cannot know ourselves, why does he bother to say it would not be desirable?

**LS:** No, I proceeded in steps, and that was only one step in my argument. I said if you read this number, 80, that a thing which is cleared up ceases to be of concern to us, and if we know ourselves, we would cease to be of concern to us. What would follow from that? The first answer would be we should not try to know ourselves, but that is surely not what Nietzsche means. The alternative interpretation, in agreement with what he says, is that perfect self-knowledge is impossible. Or do you object to that?

**Student:** That perfect self-knowledge is impossible? No, I would agree that Nietzsche doesn’t believe that perfect self-knowledge is possible.

**LS:** No; surely we have read enough, I think, in order to be sure that this is what Nietzsche meant. Think only of this aphorism in the first chapter, to which I referred before, number 8. In every philosophy there is a point where the “conviction” of the philosopher enters the scene. Or, to say it in the language of an old mystery play, “*adventavit assinus, pulcher et fortissimus*”: “there has come a donkey, beautiful and very strong.”<sup>xx</sup> You cannot go back behind that. An “it,” as Nietzsche sometimes calls it, that dictates to us and which we cannot make clear. Did I make myself clear?

---

<sup>xx</sup> BGE 8. Kaufmann, 15.

**Student:** I don't see how this one passage tells us that he's saying self-knowledge is not possible.

**LS:** All right, if you limit yourself to this epigram alone, you might be right. What would follow? How would you interpret the epigram, then, taken entirely by itself? It would mean that the Delphic god, by saying, "know thyself," has said "become objective," "become a scientific man"—or perhaps today, "become a psychoanalyst," and that is that. By itself it wouldn't mean more. But since Nietzsche is very much concerned with self-knowledge and at the same time is sure that full clarity about the deepest in oneself is impossible, this would mean then that Nietzsche would beg to differ with the Delphic god, or at least with this conclusion drawn from it.

**Student:** Is the use of psychology, though, objective?

**LS:** Well, in a way we have seen that, towards the end of chapter 1, when Nietzsche says that philosophy has to become psychology again, and there is no indication that this would not be a scientific psychology of one kind or another—I'm sure not one of the kinds dominant in Nietzsche's own time but, say, certain things in Freud. But I believe that the first aphorism of the third chapter would show Nietzsche's skepticism regarding scientific psychology. You remember that paragraph, when he speaks about the psychology of religion? Well, you have to read it, and not merely [inaudible].

**Student:** Is Nietzsche offering Socrates as an example of the kind of scientific self-disinterest [inaudible]?

**LS:** Yes, that was an old story: Nietzsche wrote in his very first work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, that Socrates is the incarnation of the scientific spirit. Of course there are differences between him and the modern scientist, but fundamentally he is *the* theoretical man. He knew somehow that this is not quite sufficient, but this is a thought running through all his work.

**Student:** Because Nietzsche poses as a question whether the oracle meant "cease to concern yourself," or "become objective," does that mean that possibly Nietzsche does see some other possible attitude toward self-knowledge than the Delphic oracle does?

**LS:** Yes, self-knowledge which does not [inaudible] that self-knowledge which is in the service of the true self, without being able fully to bring to light the true self; something of this kind. We came across this question more than once, and will come again across it. Now 84 to 86: he speaks about men and women—we don't have to read them, because they may hurt justified feelings. There are quite a few on this subject: twelve, according to my counting, in different places of this chapter. It is very interesting to observe that in none of these remarks about the two sexes is there any explicit reference to the nature of man and the nature of woman, although this is what Nietzsche clearly implies. This is an important part of Nietzsche's thinking. We will come across the question of nature next time. 87 is a particularly powerful statement.

**Reader:** “*Tethered heart, free spirit.*— If one tethers one’s heart severely and imprisons it, one can give one’s spirit many liberties: I have said that once before. But one does not believe me, unless one already knows it—”<sup>xxi</sup>

**LS:** Now this is in a way what Nietzsche does: to fetter his heart and to give his mind many freedoms. Without this fettering of the heart, he could not afford to give his mind those freedoms. He opposes the view that you must have an unfettered heart and a free mind at the same time; the opposite of what he says—to have an unfettered heart and a fettered mind—this is also of course rejected. There lies very much in that. The merely objective man would be one who gives perfect freedom or tries to give perfect freedom to both his heart and his mind; he would therefore not be a true human being, since he would be a man without convictions, and therefore he is not likely to understand the things he is trying to understand. The proper combination is the one here: a fettered heart and a free mind. One moment—there is a good comment here, in the first treatise of *The Genealogy of Morals*, towards the end of the first paragraph, when he speaks about the English psychologists—I suppose he means Hume and some others—and what makes them tick. Here, read this.

**Reader:** “But, again, people tell me that these men are simply dull old frogs—”<sup>xxii</sup>

**LS:** No, old, boring frogs. Boring, he says.

**Reader:** “boring old frogs, who hop . . . who know how to contain their emotions—”

**LS:** No, who know how to contain their heart as well as their grief. Here you have the same word.

**Reader:** “as well as their grief”?

**LS:** “Grief,” because they see terrible things.

**Reader:** “and have trained themselves . . . un-Christian, unmoral truth.”<sup>xxiii</sup>

**LS:** Yes; I think that is a comment on number 87 here. But someone raised his hand.

**Student:** Are you saying that Nietzsche emulates that, or does not emulate it, or [inaudible]?

**LS:** No, no, that is what he means; that is what he practices, or believes to practice, at least.

---

<sup>xxi</sup> BGE 87. Kaufmann, 82.

<sup>xxii</sup> *Genealogy of Morals* 1, Golffing, 158.

<sup>xxiii</sup> *Genealogy of Morals* 1. Golffing, 159.

**Student:** But that's a conviction [inaudible].

**LS:** Sure, but that is precisely the problem: How can you have a conviction and yet be critical of it? That is Nietzsche's problem. He somehow believed that it is possible.

**Student:** I don't quite understand that, because to the extent to which the man is changed by self-knowledge, doesn't his conviction change as well?

**LS:** Yes.

**Same Student:** So that the fettered heart is not simply true, or not true in the sense that one [inaudible] that it could be understood to be fettered in one place.

**LS:** But take a simple example from what we read before, in number 74. A man of genius is unbearable if he does not possess at least two other things in addition: gratitude and cleanliness. Would that change? Or take Nietzsche's own life. He had first, when he was young, great gratitude toward Wagner, the composer, and Schopenhauer. He was then disappointed and turned away from them, and he said some quite terrible things about them, especially about Wagner. But you can see even through this rejection and the way in which it is expressed that he can never forget what he owed to him, i.e., his gratitude. It is not an act of ingratitude but of something else that he turns on them. So gratitude and cleanliness here belong to the heart, don't they, and not to the mind, if we make this distinction?

**Student:** [Inaudible]

**Another Student:** As an aside, didn't he elsewhere say that gratitude was merely a subverted form of revenge?

**LS:** Yes, something to that effect. That follows necessarily because every human quality stems from the will to power. Still, it is then a very sublimated form of the will to power [inaudible]. In other words, compared to the simple, vulgar revenge, which simply means inflicting evil on someone who did evil to you, gratitude is a highly sublimated form of the will to power. Still, the connection can sometimes be seen from the very simple fact that people frequently regard gratitude as a burden. Have you ever heard of that? Well, that is one sign; there are other signs. The French moralists, whom Nietzsche greatly admired, like La Rochefoucauld [inaudible] and such people, they made a lot of observations about this kind of ambiguity. But in spite of these ambiguities, gratitude is something much higher than ingratitude, which doesn't mean that under certain conditions ingratitude, breaking of all bonds, may not be good for a certain individual. That is not excluded. This is surely what Nietzsche means if we disregard the sometimes exaggerated expressions. There are no universally valid rules. This Nietzsche surely means. Now there is one more epigram which we must discuss briefly, number 150.

**Reader:** “Around the hero everything turns into a tragedy; around the demi-god into a satyr play; and around God—what? perhaps into ‘world’?—”<sup>xxiv</sup>

**LS:** “World” is in quotation marks. What does this mean? It surely means in the first place that according to this passage the satyr play is higher than tragedy. This, however, is not the key point; the key point is the last one: “around God, everything turns, perhaps, into a ‘world.’” Does this mean no world without a god (or, here he says simply “God”)? There is another passage which we have [inaudible]. In paragraph 9 towards the end, he had said, after having spoken about the Stoics, “every philosophy always creates the world after its image.”

**Reader:** “it cannot do otherwise.”<sup>xxv</sup>

**LS:** Yes. Every philosophy, we learned at that time, creates the world after its image, but here he speaks of “God.” Does it mean that the world cannot be of merely human origin? And how would Nietzsche, after his strong atheistic statements, mean that?

**Student:** Well, the satyr play is between tragedy and comedy, so it is reasonable to assume that the world would simply be equated with a comedy.

**LS:** Well, the satyr play is not a comedy.

**Student:** No, I said it’s in between a tragedy and a comedy.

**LS:** No, if you want to do that, then you would have to coordinate somehow God and the comedy, which is [inaudible]. No, there *is* some evidence [inaudible] the first aphorism of *The Dawn of Morning*<sup>xxvi</sup>—read that perhaps. Good. But let us try to understand that. The world cannot be of merely human origin; there must be a God around which it becomes a world. What can Nietzsche mean by that? We must consider the distinction which he has made earlier, namely, the one between the world of concern to us and the world in itself. I suggest that we experiment with this view that there is no world of concern to us: to men, without God. In order to see what this can mean, you must only consider what we observed when discussing number 34. The world of concern to us, we can say (abbreviating a long story) is the world of things in their fullness as distinguished from mere primary qualities in the Lockean sense. But that fullness would include not only the secondary qualities but also all value qualities, and especially the sacred: therefore there would be God. This is, I believe, what Nietzsche means. It is hard to say. There may be a connection also with the doctrine of eternal return, but that is not so clear to me. Surely there is no difficulty in understanding the last of these aphorisms, number 185.

**Reader:** “‘I don’t like him’—”

---

<sup>xxiv</sup> BGE 150. Kaufmann, 90.

<sup>xxv</sup> BGE 9. Kaufmann, 16.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Strauss’s translation of *Morgenröte* (often translated as *Daybreak*).

**LS:** “‘don’t like *it*.’”

**Reader:** “‘it.’—Why?— ‘I am not equal to it.’—Has any human being answered that way?”<sup>xxvii</sup>

**LS:** Well, I think that is not necessary [inaudible] or is there any ambiguity about the meaning of that? You have difficulties?

**Student:** [Inaudible]

**LS:** That people reject something explicitly on the grounds that they are not up to it? Well, for example: if someone rejects, say, becoming an astronaut because he doesn’t believe he could stand that—or do you mean that this would be an objection? Nietzsche means, say, a religion, a philosophy, a work of art, and so it is rejected on the grounds that one is not up to it. You must not understand it in too pedestrian a manner. Number 160 we can perhaps also consider.

**Reader:** “One no longer loves one’s insight enough once one communicates it.”<sup>xxviii</sup>

**LS:** This doesn’t make sense to you? If one’s insight is one’s most private possession, does it not make sense then? This thought is developed very beautifully in the last aphorism of *Beyond Good and Evil*; you can perhaps read that, Mr. [student]. Now, one more: 161.

**Reader:** “Poets treat their experiences shamelessly: they exploit them.”<sup>xxix</sup>

**LS:** Does this make sense? Good. It’s only another indication of the theme of the sense of shame, of how it goes through this chapter, and of the conflict between the sense of shame and probity. That is fundamental for Nietzsche’s thought. Now, is there anyone who has special difficulty with any particular epigram? We could then read it.

**Student:** 124.

**LS:** Yes, read it.

**Reader:** “Whoever rejoices on the very stake triumphs not over pain but at the absence of pain that he had expected. A parable.”<sup>xxx</sup>

**LS:** Yes, that’s hard. Is there anyone who would [inaudible]? Is there anyone who believes he can decipher that, especially since it is a parable?

---

<sup>xxvii</sup> *BGE* 185. Kaufmann, 94.

<sup>xxviii</sup> *BGE* 160. Kaufmann, 91.

<sup>xxix</sup> *BGE* 161. Kaufmann, 91.

<sup>xxx</sup> *BGE* 124. Kaufmann, 86.

**Student:** I think there's another aphorism in there, where he says something about its being the foundation of many moralities that we like to believe that what is most virtuous is also the hardest or most difficult for us to do, right? That's in there someplace.

**LS:** Yes.

**Same Student:** And I think what he's trying to say here is that, again, speaking in a Christian context, Christian tradition and Christian ethics and Christian morality tend to "castrate"—he uses that word—certain instincts, certain manifestations of the personal will to power. Christianity is anti-life, in a sense; it has its center of gravity beyond the earth. It's the will to nothingness. Hence, maybe the Christian martyr, for example, finds that this will to nothingness, this ability to escape the responsibility of earth, is in point of fact a much easier thing for him to do than to remain here, find out, and develop his being. What he regards as hardest, to go back to that other epigram [inaudible]. He would like to have his supposed virtue be what is viewed as the hardest thing for him to do—in other words, to become a martyr—whereas in point of fact, it is not the hardest thing for him to do but the easiest thing for him to do. Hence, when he gets to the stake, he rejoices at the fact that he has found, you know, his niche. This is really the escape for him. This is really his out, and in point of fact not a torture at all but a deliverance.

**LS:** In other words, the pleasure of redemption prevents his feeling the pain of being burned. Is that what you mean?

**Student 1:** No, no.

**Student 2:** May I attempt to interpret it?

**Student 1:** All right, Mr. [student].

**Student 2:** I take Latimer and Ridley being burned by Bloody Mary as a case in point of this.<sup>xxx</sup> The pain referred to is not simply the physical pain, but the pain caused particularly by inquisitors who wished to prove to their victims that they were wrong—which would indeed be, for men of the type of Latimer and Ridley, a greater pain than a physical agony. They were perhaps a little nervous themselves about the possibility that they might recant and change their mind when half cooked. To find that cooked though they were, their faith remains firm—in other words, that that real pain the inquisitors had sought to inflict and which they did fear has not come about—is their triumph.

**LS:** It does not convince me, I must say. Mr. [student].

**Student:** Could the key distinction here be that one still finds pain, but only where one didn't expect it? I can't supply the full answer but, in other words, he's saying that one

---

<sup>xxx</sup> Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, Protestant clergymen burned at the stake in 1555 by Queen Mary I.



expects to feel pain in certain things, and instead one feels it in a different thing where it doesn't really matter [inaudible].

**LS:** Well, I must say I have not been able to decipher this, and there are others which I have not been able to decipher. Mr. [student].

**Student:** I was going to offer another suggestion for an interpretation.

**LS:** All right.

**Same Student:** If a parable is a story or a homily that would convey a reflection or some sort of spiritual relationship between man and God, then very possibly a man who rejoices at the stake could be a man who in contemporary morality rejoices in the fact that by moral standards he is condemned, and that he will be rejoicing over a pain which would be a hell that he would find out does not exist. How about that?

**LS:** I don't know. Now, there are still a few aphorisms in the preceding chapter, "On Religion," which we have not considered, from 56 on; I hope we will find the time for them next time.

[end of session]

---

<sup>1</sup> Changed from "issue."

<sup>2</sup> Changed from "going."

<sup>3</sup> Changed from "on the other hand."

<sup>4</sup> Changed from "he."

## Session 8: no date

**Leo Strauss:** <sup>i</sup>[Inaudible] and the values are not taken from beyond life. Is the same not also true of utilitarianism and Marxism, for instance?

**Student:** Perhaps, but I think they wouldn't question their premises as the new philosopher would.

**LS:** But is this Nietzsche's objection to utilitarianism and socialism?

**Student:** No, not only; his criticism of socialism and utilitarianism is that they are herd moralities.

**LS:** This did not sufficiently come out in your paper, although this is crucial. A transvaluation of values is necessary, you say, according to Nietzsche. Why?

**Student:** In order that man be able to rise above the mere contemporary moralities, or the morality in vogue at that historical moment.

**LS:** And why is that necessary?

**Student:** In order for them to rise above—

**LS:** Why? Would it not be good enough to be decent?

**Student:** Not for Nietzsche.

**LS:** Why not? Yes, surely not, but why not?

**Student:** Well, it seems that this tends to stifle man's natural inclinations and his natural will to power.

**LS:** If someone heard you, they would think that Nietzsche speaks all the time of natural inclinations, which is not the case.

**Student:** Why not?

**LS:** He does not speak of it.

**Student:** Not natural in the universal sense, but can't one man have a certain natural passion or inclination, and can't another man have a certain natural passion or

---

<sup>i</sup> Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the start of the session. The reading was not recorded.

inclination? And if these conflict with what is the common code of morality, then he is hampered.

**LS:** So Nietzsche would take the side of juvenile delinquents, would he?

**Student:** Perhaps yes and perhaps no.

**LS:** Well, that is good enough, though what you said is a bit vague. One point where you [inaudible] Nietzsche, but I think you made a wrong use of it. You spoke of the conflict between nature and life. What is the basis of this distinction? How did you arrive at this assertion from the text?

**Student:** A great deal from paragraph 200.

**LS:** Can you show me the passage where he speaks of that?

**Student:** “But when the opposition and war in such a nature—”

**LS:** “In such a nature.” But that is not a distinction between nature and life, is it?

**Student:** No. But you see, the distinction between nature and life can be viewed in two different ways, both of which admit of a conflict. This is what I think. This is the theory that I had to reconstruct from the chapter itself; in no single place is it outlined. On the one hand, nature in itself is indifferent; nature doesn’t tell us anything one way or another. If a man then has a will to create something, here is one conflict between man’s life and nature. On the other hand, when morality equates nature with itself—in other words, when it says “it is natural to do this,” like the Stoics and so on, and this then becomes natural, then man’s life can conflict with that description of nature also.

**LS:** Well, however this may be, there is a basis for your distinction in number 9, which we read at the beginning; we can’t reread that now. But this is an occasional distinction, and Nietzsche argues on a variety of levels, one cannot freeze it at that, so I suggest that we drop this distinction. It won’t help us. A final question: Nietzsche not only analyzes the various moralities, but he makes definite judgments on various moralities. What is his standard?

**Student:** His standard is mostly a negative one, with a hint of a positive.

**LS:** What does that mean?

**Student:** He would stand against utilitarianism, herd morality, Christian morality, etc. [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, but on what grounds? It is, after all, and in spite of what Nietzsche says occasionally or seems to say occasionally, not merely an expression of his private taste; it

is meant to be much more. What is the standard, or at least the principle, which supplies the balance?

**Student:** In that they take themselves as universals and absolutes, and hence tend to hamper one's will, which may contradict them.

**LS:** Yes, but which is that will which opposes itself to, say, utilitarianism? There is a term which we have used all the time, compelled by Nietzsche himself: the "will to power." These moralities would all be inferior forms of the will to power. That is, schematically stated, Nietzsche's criticism. Since, however, what Nietzsche understands by will to power is not clear enough at our present stage of understanding, we are not perhaps impressed by it. Now, how can he argue? What is the general character of his argument? Does Nietzsche have, in other words, a standard which is not identical with the will to power and which we can understand therefore more easily? A standard not supplied by nature, because there is something problematic about that, as you have indicated, still less a standard supplied by reason. Is there an alternative to nature and reason? (Of course, I won't say a word about the will of God, because that is out for other reasons.) Is there an alternative to these three possibilities: nature, reason, and the will of God?

**Student:** History, somehow.

**LS:** Yes, but we must get a more concrete expression of that thought.

**Student:** Nietzsche sometimes speaks of the moralities as being noble or not noble, so it might be nobility.

**LS:** Yes, that is true. But still, this is not sufficiently clear (except negatively) against utilitarianism in its cruder form, which denies that there is anything intrinsically noble but only the pleasant and the useful. To that extent it would help; but it wouldn't help any against Plato, for example, or Kant.

**Student:** Creativity?

**LS:** No.

**Student:** Perhaps a morality which allows the strongest to come to the forefront [inaudible].

**LS:** That could still be understood in terms of nature, you see; that's the point. No, but the suggestion of Mr. [student] [i.e., history] is more helpful. Let us consider the case of Marx, for example. Marx, in order to find his bearings or to help others in finding their bearings, makes this famous analysis of the situation around 1850, let us say: the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. His general thesis is that the bourgeois position is in every respect full of self-contradictions—hypocrisy, helplessness against a crisis—whereas the opposite is true of the proletariat. Therefore we know what to do: If

we are honest people and have the courage to disregard our immediate expediency, we have to line up with the proletariat. Here there is no reference to nature, nor to reason as reason, but there is a standard supplied by the situation, a strictly immanent standard. Does this make sense? This is what you meant, I believe. Last time the student who read his paper spoke about the “cultural situation” . . . was that the term?

**Student:** The “situational ethics”?

**LS:** Yes, more or less. In other words, if you see your situation properly and honestly, then it points you to something, to a way which is *now* the right way. The proletarian morality would have been preposterous in the sixteenth century, but now, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (well, at least in the twentieth century), the situation is so much changed that the less said about it the better for the memory of Marx.

**Student:** Are you using nature in the [inaudible] sense of universal nature, or [inaudible]?

**LS:** Well, the nature of man. The nature of the hippopotamus is not very important in this connection. But there is no reference to the nature of man, because there were always men and there has always been what was right for men. For example, in classical Greece the question would be whether it is right for a free man or for a slave. Very different things.

**Student:** It just seems that history for Nietzsche is even more separated from nature than history for Marx is [inaudible].

**LS:** Well, we will come to that, but let us see whether we cannot find here some parallel.

**Student:** Would the word *telos* be wholly wide of the mark? That the immanence of the situation as pointing to the way things ought to be [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, but it points to an end—for example, the classless society, in the case of Marx. That comes out [inaudible] first you see the present situation: proletariat and bourgeoisie. Now let me first finish this point; I want to come to that. But this Marxist analysis, even if true, does not yet prove that the cause of the proletariat is *the* cause of man—I mean, of the truly human. This is shown only by a broader consideration, namely, by a reflection on the whole of history, which we may call a philosophy of history, and which shows us that *the* fact throughout the history of civilization was the class struggle. This then points to a classless society, and therefore the cause of the proletariat is a higher and more compelling cause than any earlier cause. That is what Marx means. Now the question is whether there is not something similar—formally similar, although the content would be entirely different—in the case of Nietzsche. Let us consider number 194. It is quite long, but we have no choice but to read it.

**Reader:** “The difference among men . . . possessing *something* good.”

**LS:** No, a good.

**Reader:** “Regarding a woman, for example—”

**LS:** A far-fetched example.

**Reader:** “those men who are more modest . . . he dares to let himself be fathomed.”

**LS:** Let us skip the sequel. He speaks of the other side of the same phenomenon, of having and possessing, towards the end. “Parents.”

**Reader:** “Parents involuntarily turn children . . . for another possession. So it follows—”<sup>ii</sup>

**LS:** From which it follows, and so on. What follows? That true love will not be possessive, but the beloved helped to be himself or herself. Does that not make sense? The phenomenon that parents try to stamp their children in their own image, in the parents’ own image, is well known. It is sometimes ridiculous, sometimes also sad. What Nietzsche says against that today I think has become a commonplace, or almost a commonplace. Now I’m concerned here with the way Nietzsche is arguing. We have love here and loving, and not in the biblical sense of the word but in the ordinary sense. Novels are written chiefly about the subject of love, or at least they were in former times. So there is a lot of judging and talking about loving, and a lot of speaking. And Nietzsche says here: Look, you take the man who believes he possesses a woman because he sleeps with her (to put it brutally), and while he sleeps with her, she thinks of somebody else. And he calls that having her: what a fool. Therefore, someone who has a more subtle notion of possessing a woman has a deeper understanding of what loving means than the first one. We can have a whole gradation of such notions of loving. This follows<sup>iii</sup>, but it doesn’t mean that people were at all times capable of making these distinctions; Nietzsche and quite a few contemporaries of Nietzsche were able to do so.

In other words, there is an immanent criterion here. In understanding loving, you are led from a very crude notion of loving to a more subtle one. That is something which is not radically different from Platonic ways of arguing. If someone wants to use that word, he could even say dialectics, although Nietzsche doesn’t use it and I think it would be wrong to use it. For ordinary vulgar conversation, that might pass. Of course, this is a clear case in which, without having any wider horizon than just thinking of this phenomenon and observing, we reach the view that the parent who does not regard the child as his possession but loves his child by helping him be his true self, to the extent to which this is wise, is a more loving parent than the one who does the opposite. There remains of course one question here, if we limit ourselves to this example: Is being loved and loving in the most profound manner the sole or even the most important consideration? There, of course, we would have to go beyond this kind of reasoning I suggested hitherto, and we can say that Nietzsche would question whether loving or being loved is the most

---

<sup>ii</sup> *BGE* 194. Kaufmann, 106-08.

<sup>iii</sup> Presumably Strauss is referring to the “so it follows” at the end of aphorism 194.

important consideration. Is this point clear? Therefore something else is needed; what that something else in Nietzsche is, we must see.

There is also another point for stating this immanent criticism. Nietzsche looks around and he sees a danger which in his view no one else has seen, a danger to man which never has existed before. That is what Zarathustra calls the last man, the ultimate degeneracy of man: this is a possibility now and was never a possibility before. What is the basis of this value judgment? How does he see that? We must get out of the vague generalities, as I tried to say before. How is he enabled to see this danger? Well, as Nietzsche puts it in one of his earlier writings (because he is trained, educated, by earlier times), he means especially by classical antiquity. In other words, he has received through an understood tradition a standard of human goodness or greatness, measured by which present-day man in his potentiality can be diagnosed as the “last man.” Here we don’t have to raise this graver question of what the support of, say, these classical notions of the good man is. It is clear (immanently, by a comparison between, say, what Homer or Aeschylus conveys and what the novels of the nineteenth century convey) that this is a decay. I’m not saying that Nietzsche’s argument is true; I’m only trying to state the simple character of the argument and what is meant when people speak of history.

Therefore, since this is an entirely new danger to man, Nietzsche concludes we need an entirely new remedy. None of the traditional remedies will help, and therefore we must question even the highest traditional ideas. Whether that follows from his diagnosis is of course an open question. But we must leave aside this simplistic notion fostered by a certain kind of social science methodology that the question, What’s your value? must have some absolute basis. This is not the way in which we think, speak and discuss in practice, in concrete discussions. We must follow this latter way because we learn something about human things even by such practical discussion that remains closer to the immediate issues than if we had used a method which ascends immediately to the highest principles.

**Student:** I think one of the problems at least I’m having is that if Nietzsche turns to a questioning of even the old higher vision of man, doesn’t his very questioning of that undermine the foundation of his criticism of the future man? If the future man, the final man, is criticized on the basis of a vision of man he has learned from a tradition, and if in trying to find a new cure for this he makes a radical critique of this tradition, doesn’t that radical critique run a danger of undermining the very thing which made criticism possible?

**LS:** There is a certain danger, yes; sure, Nietzsche knows that. But he takes that risk because he would simply say that the traditional moralities have in fact lost their power already; they have still a certain social power which he does not deny, but they are no longer in their vigor [and] therefore this is but a minor risk. That, I think, is what he would say. Someone else raised his hand.

**Student:** I wonder why it is that the classical values are chosen rather than other values, say of the novels of the nineteenth century.

**LS:** Well, one could say that Nietzsche's word for that is nihilism. That nihilism shows itself everywhere in the nineteenth century. He would have to show<sup>1</sup> with what right he can say that of people like Tolstoy, and Balzac, and so on, but that is implied here even if his criticism is not developed. That has to do with his peculiar kind of writing, of which I wanted to speak in connection with our difficulties last time. You were the one, Mr. [student], who raised your [inaudible]. What was your question? I will return to that immediately. No, go ahead.

**Student:** You set out trying to establish the means by which Nietzsche is able to say that the modern age is degenerate, and you referred to the process of education: that he knows without having gone through it [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, but the understood tradition, not merely that he was conditioned.

**Student:** Oh, right. You said that this way was sufficient to know, or that this seemed to be what Nietzsche was relying on, that the understood tradition over a period of time indicated to him clearly that there was this degeneracy today. And since there's a difference between that and, in a sense, when he looks back in history and he talks about [inaudible] for example, in 188, with respect to what is essential in all morality, he talks more about the strictures placed on the intellect and the spirit rather than any sort of substantive morality at all. In other words, he didn't worry [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, but you have to read it in its context, this aphorism and every aphorism, for that matter.<sup>2</sup> This particular paragraph, you mean, is directed against permissiveness as an overall principle. You must not draw a further conclusion from that than is intended in that paragraph, unless you show the cause of why you have to go beyond that.

**Student:** Well, in the last part, he says, "You shall obey—someone and for a long time: *else* you will perish and lose the last respect for yourself"—this appears to me to be the moral imperative of nature—"

**LS:** Yes, this is a very important paragraph, and we will come to that. But let me now return first to the question of how to read Nietzsche. We have already looked at *The Genealogy of Morals*, Preface, the eighth and last paragraph. Do you have that? Now let us read the whole.

**Reader:** "Should this treatise seem unintelligible or jarring to some readers, I think the fault need not necessarily be laid at my door."

**LS:** Think, please, of the difficulties which we had when trying to decipher chapter 4 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. This is a milder case, but the conclusion is *a fortiori* permitted.

**Reader:** "It is plain enough . . . remain difficult to digest."<sup>iv</sup>

---

<sup>iv</sup> *Genealogy of Morals*, Preface, 8. Golffing, 157.



**LS:** What Nietzsche suggests is clear: that one has to read him very carefully and that despite the appearance in many, many passages of Nietzsche that it is very easy, very amusing, and exciting to read him, and he is the most brilliant writer, and what have you—yet he requires careful reading. Nietzsche referred more than once to the fact that he was a trained classical scholar, i.e., a man trained in the art of reading very carefully the ancient books. That is surely true. We must however raise this question: Can we read, or must we read Nietzsche, as we read the better ancient writers—or, to take the extreme case, Plato? Must he not be read differently? I would like to read something which I couldn't say better now, what I wrote in my study on Machiavelli about the older books.

The perfect book or speech obeys in every respect the pure and merciless laws of what Plato has called<sup>v</sup> logographic necessity [**LS:** the necessity governing the writing of speeches—which means any writings]. The perfect speech contains nothing slipshod; in it there are no loose threads; it contains no word that has been picked up at random; it is not marred by errors due to faulty memory, or to any other kind of carelessness; strong passions and a powerful and fertile imagination are guided with ease by a reason which knows how to use the unexpected gift, which knows how to persuade and which knows how to forbid; it allows of no adornment which is not imposed by the gravity and the aloofness of the subject matter; the perfect writer rejects with disdain and with some impatience the demand of vulgar rhetoric that expressions must be varied since change is pleasant.<sup>vi</sup>

If one takes this as a sufficiently clear statement as to what a perfect writing in the ancient sense is, what is the striking difference between that and the perfect book as Nietzsche conceived of it? I believe one can say this: the reason, which ultimately controls imagination and passion, is not meant to have this function in Nietzsche. So if he has a certain insight which he expresses, say, in an aphorism, and it leads to another aphorism containing another insight, we cannot assume in the way in which we do in the case of Plato that there is a connection of the necessity or evidence which Plato demands. What I can tell you about that is very little, but I think I can't do better at the moment, at least.

Let us turn to chapter 5. First the title (what is it called again?): “On the Natural History of Morality.” This title reminds one of an essay by Hume called “The Natural History of Religion,” which you might very well have a look at. Hume makes there a distinction between the origin of religion in human nature and its foundation in reason. What he says about its foundation in reason is along the lines of eighteenth-century Deism, but it can be doubted whether this is Hume's last word on the subject, and it can be doubted on the basis of his dialogues on natural religion. I do not want to go into that. Hume, at any rate, deals only with the origin of religion in human nature. Nietzsche no longer speaks of the

---

<sup>v</sup> In original: “what has been called”

<sup>vi</sup> *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 120-21. The phrase in brackets was added by Strauss while reading.

natural history of religion because this problem is settled for him, in a way, by what happened between Hume and him, say, by Feuerbach and others. But his historical-critical concern extends to morality. Hume did not write a natural history of morality; that is a more recent thing. We have already seen in number 32 of *Beyond Good and Evil* (which we cannot now reread) a sketch, a one-sided sketch of the history of morality as Nietzsche saw it. But let us keep in mind for the understanding of this present chapter the title: “*Natural History of Morality*.” Nietzsche refers us by the very title to nature, and we must see what he means by that.

What he says in number 186, even if this was rather novel when he wrote *Beyond Good and Evil*, has long ceased to be novel. There is a book by the French sociologist, Durkheim, *Science de la morale et science des morales*, I believe it is called, *Science of Morality and Science of the Moralities*.<sup>vii</sup> Of course, what we can have is a natural science of the moralities and not a science of *the* morality, because *ça n'existe pas*, as they say in French: that doesn't exist. This science is strictly descriptive, comparative, and opposed to the traditional philosophic science of morals, which Nietzsche describes here as utterly naive. He gives only one example, that of Schopenhauer, who had said—and that is indeed quite amazing—that everyone knows what the good life is: hurt no one; on the contrary, help everyone, all, as much as you can. Nietzsche simply rejects that here as absolutely wrong and sentimental in a world the essence of which is the will to power.

Then in the next number he comes to a greater man, to Kant, and asks what the categorical imperative is, and not in terms of the question of whether such a categorical imperative exists, but in terms of what it reveals about someone like Kant, who says there *is* a categorical imperative. The answer is that it expresses a certain moral taste, a certain morality, and therewith of course a certain form of the will to power, although this is not here stated explicitly. Now we come to this very important paragraph, number 188, to which Mr. [student] has drawn our attention, and which we must read.

**Reader:** “Every morality . . . also against ‘reason’—”

**LS:** Does he have these two words in quotation marks?

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** “Nature” occurs very frequently here and always in quotation marks, which indicates that Nietzsche uses and adapts himself to the popular usage, but this popular usage is no longer his own usage. He would call it *x*, but not “nature.”

**Student:** In the last paragraph, does it also have quotation marks?

---

<sup>vii</sup> Strauss may have meant Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's *La morale et la sciences des moeurs* (Paris, 1953). First published 1903. Less probably, he may have meant Charles Renouvier, *Science de la morale* (Paris: Fayard, 2002). First published 1869. Durkheim did not write a science of morality.

**LS:** No, the final mention does not have them. That is a peculiarity of this; you are quite right. I was going to bring it up as a surprise when we came to that, so you destroyed that rhetorical device. Now, read again.

**Reader:** “Every morality . . . tyranny and unreason is impermissible.”

**LS:** In other words, you can criticize such a morality only on the basis of another morality, not in your quality as a value-free social scientist, as we would say today.

**Reader:** “What is essential . . . and *not* that *laissez aller*.”<sup>viii</sup>

**LS:** We can unfortunately not read that whole; let us skip the next few sentences, when he speaks of the European mind. All his subtleties and refinements have been acquired *through* obedience to such arbitrary laws. “Granted that in this process, irreplaceably much of power and spirit has been pressed down.” Do you have it?

**Reader:** “in the process an irreplaceable amount . . . outrageous but noble.”<sup>ix</sup>

**LS:** You see, when he had spoken of nature before, in number 9, he had then said something similar about the indifference of nature; but here it is used in quotes. Now, let us start two sentences, or one and a half sentences later: “One can consider.”

**Reader:** “any morality with this in mind . . . the moral imperative of nature—”

**LS:** *Not* in quotes.

**Reader:** “which, to be sure . . . to the whole hum an animal, to *man*.”<sup>x</sup>

**LS:** The main point which he makes is that every morality is a tyranny against “nature” and of course also against “reason.” We have heard this in a different way at the beginning of the *Zarathustra*, in “The Three Metamorphoses of the Mind.” The first is the camel, the acceptance of heavy burdens without which man can never become truly human. That is not the highest stage. The questioning of these burdens, and something which can no longer in any way be called obedience, is a higher form, what is indicated there by the child. Nevertheless, against many of his contemporaries and many of our contemporaries, he holds this point: that obedience rather than permissiveness makes men truly human. In that respect, Nietzsche agrees with the tradition in spite of his *ultimate* questioning of obedience. There is a certain agreement then also with Kant, of whom he had spoken, and who was a teacher of obedience.

The point which I would like to emphasize more strongly is this: that Nietzsche uses “nature” all the time with quotation marks, except at the end. What does this indicate?

---

<sup>viii</sup> BGE 188. Kaufmann, 100.

<sup>ix</sup> BGE 188. Kaufmann, 101.

<sup>x</sup> BGE 188. Kaufmann, 101-02.

Nature has become problematic for Nietzsche; hence the quotation marks. The reason, we can say, is history: there is no nature of man, no unchangeable nature of man, as we will see by quite a few examples. Or more radically, perhaps: “Nature” is a certain interpretation of phenomena and not something which the phenomena bear on their forehead, as it were; so that we would look, say, at a worm, and then see that, oh, that’s a natural being, and at a table, and we see it is not a natural being. The simple proof of that is that there are many languages which don’t have a word for nature. The most important one is Hebrew. There is no Old Testament word for nature. The word which later on came into the Jewish tradition comes from Syria via a word which corresponds to the Greek word *charactēr*, character, a possible translation of the Greek *physis*, nature, understood as *eidos*, as form. It is very hard for us to understand how people could have found their bearings at all without being aware of such a thing, but that is an attempt which we must make.

**Student:** I don’t understand why Nietzsche has quotation marks around the word “nature” in the text on the bottom of page 101.<sup>xi</sup>

**LS:** Meaning that what traditionally would be called “nature” strives not for “easy-goingness,” permissiveness, doing what one likes, but for a tyranny against oneself, as he says there.

**Student:** But this seems to be directly parallel to the usage of the word in the next sentence.

**LS:** Sure. But it is not as simple; it is a bit more subtle in that Nietzsche uses the word in quotation marks throughout the chapter except once, at the end, in order to make clear that this concept has become questionable for him. Then at the end he uses it without quotation marks in order to make clear that perhaps one must restore it again. Does that not make sense? I can give you some proof. Consider number 61, in an earlier chapter (that is at the end of the chapter on religion; we cannot read that now) when he speaks there for example of “individual natures of such a noble origin,” and so on. You would find a much stronger statement of this in his *Anti-Christ*, number 57, which is somewhat later and much less restrained than *Beyond Good and Evil*. As a matter of fact, it was printed only in 1909<sup>xii</sup>, I believe, some time after Nietzsche’s death, because it was too strong medicine. And there, in number 57, he uses nature without any quotation marks and gives a hierarchy of human types which, to say the least, reminds one of Plato’s *Republic* and is stated in terms of natures. Nietzsche in a way needed [inaudible] his very notion of hierarchy, of a natural order, forced him to sympathize with the concept of nature; and at the same time, his connection with evolution and history prevented him from doing so. I think we will get some more examples of that when we go on. Let me see.

---

<sup>xi</sup> *BGE*, 188. Kaufmann, 101.

<sup>xii</sup> 1895.

So this is then the first point which Nietzsche makes apart from the criticism of Schopenhauer, to come back to the substantive issues: a morality of not hurting anyone is impossible. (By the way, the simplest empirical proof of this would be of course from foreign policy and war, because however just a war may be, quite a few people get hurt who are not responsible for the war, and not merely because the areas in which civilians are bombed. This also happened prior to there being any airplanes.) This is the first point. The second point is about the permissiveness, the extreme liberalism or however you call it, which raised its head already in Europe at that time and has not ceased to raise its head in Europe and in this country since. He gives a further example in 189, when he speaks of the need for seasons of fasting, of deliberate self-restraint. Read only the end of this paragraph.

**Reader:** “This is also a hint for an explanation . . . —into love (*amour-passion*).”<sup>xiii</sup>

**LS:** Yes, this is another example: this sublimation was due to “a tyranny,” and therefore we should not expect that a man’s rank would rise with the abandonment of restraints. There might even be a necessity for much severer restraints, if we will see man at his highest. Then in 190 he begins to criticize another ingredient of modern morality, namely, utilitarianism, which he there links up in a very questionable way with Socrates. Of course, on the face of it, there is some truth to this in that Socrates says (we have read it in the *Apology* last quarter, you remember?) that if you want to have the good things of life, like money, which buys everything, then you have to be virtuous. That occurs in many Socratic passages, but it is a very narrow view of Socrates and cannot be taken very seriously. There is a nice joke which he makes at the expense of Plato at the end, as you will see (Plato was in his view not a utilitarian, because he comes from the upper strata of society; he was a kinsman of Solon, the Athenian legislator), when he applies to him, with a slight variation, what is said about the Chimaera, that fabulous animal in the *Odyssey*: “*prosthe leōn, opithen de drakōn, messē de chimaira*,” “a lion in front, behind a serpent, and in the middle a goat.”<sup>xiv</sup> Nietzsche applies this to the Platonic Socrates: “in front Plato, behind Plato, and in between a Chimaera.” Then he goes on with that questioning of Socrates, which means the same as utilitarianism for him: the point is the reduction of utilitarianism and Socratism to the morality of the herd. So we have two ingredients of modern morality: permissiveness; and second, the herd. These are obviously very different: there are herds and have been herds which were the opposite of permissive. These are two different things.

He goes on to analyze the herd instinct in number 192. In all knowledge, even in sense perception, we do not perceive what is but in a way what we are told to perceive, a thought which has become very popular in the meantime in social science. Concern with seeing things as they are requires liberation from the herd. We remember perhaps the end of number 39, the remark of Stendhal that in order to see well the things which are, one

<sup>xiii</sup> *BGE* 189. Kaufmann, 102.

<sup>xiv</sup> Strauss says *Odyssey*, evidently in error. *Iliad* 6.181. The word *chimaira* was used to mean both “she-goat” and by extension the Chimaera as a whole.

has to be, for example, a banker, a successful banker—you know, the kind of mind where you see much better than if you are just a nice guy. We have discussed this, number 194.

Then he turns in 195 to the slave morality. The slave morality is not the herd morality; it is the third ingredient, and that he traces to the Jews. Because the herd as such would consist of freemen, of course, but the slave morality is something different and [is] traced by Nietzsche to the Jews. Then 196 is a kind of interlude which seems to say that it is necessary to divine the true meaning of moralities. These meanings are not visible. And the preceding aphorism, number 195, gave an example of it. Nietzsche divines the slave morality in the morality of the Old Testament.

Then he turns after this preparation—and without stating it explicitly—to the master morality, and gives the first specimen of a master: Cesare Borgia, an old acquaintance of those among you who have read Machiavelli. Nietzsche makes one point: that it would be wrong to interpret his life in a Judeo-Christian way, namely, to believe that at any time he had a bad conscience which made him very dissatisfied with his evil deeds. Nietzsche says that, well, he was very happy in himself *because* of his evil deeds. Moreover, the criticism of such types has to do with fear of them; and morality as fearfulness is an important part of Nietzsche's unmasking of traditional morality. How much do we reject certain human types merely because we fear them?

**Student:** The reference to the tropical man or the virgin forest seems to imply that Cesare Borgia is something like the natural man.

**LS:** In quotations, yes? That is not unimportant. In other words, and crudely speaking, you could say that this is a natural being, Cesare Borgia, and someone living against nature; not only the Bible but also Plato would say that the tyrant is a being living against nature.<sup>xv</sup>

**Student:** Is his point the very fact that present-day morality has to go against nature in order to justify itself?

**LS:** No, he is still trying to lead up to something. He has suggested that the morality of permissiveness, the morality of the herd, *and* the morality of the slaves are not good things. He has asserted that; you can say he has merely expressed his taste, but these points come later on together. Then he says, as an example and in order at the same time to frighten people away from his own teaching, that Cesare Borgia is perfectly acceptable to him, as Machiavelli had said before him. This is of course an exaggeration, but that is part of his pedagogy. And now in number 198, he enlarges this point: all eudaemonistic moralities, which are concerned with opposing the dangerous life, have fear as their root. You remember perhaps from the *Zarathustra*, the speech on the chairs of virtue, where these teachers teach a morality as the best way toward a sound sleep? This is developed in a clearer way here, in a way easier to understand. Now in number 199, Nietzsche says that hitherto there has been a preponderance of the herd morality among men, a morality

---

<sup>xv</sup> *Republic*, Book 9.

of obeying other men or obeying impersonal norms or ideals—so much so that even those who were commanding or born to command interpreted their commanding as a form of obedience. Let us read the beginning of this paragraph.

**Reader:** “Inasmuch as at all times . . . now innate in the average man—”<sup>xvi</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. “It is *now* innate”: this perhaps helps us in understanding better why Nietzsche puts nature in quotation marks. Nothing, so to speak, belongs to man from the very beginning. Almost everything, and surely everything of any interest, has been acquired; therefore we cannot speak of the nature of man. Does this not make sense? This is so popular today that I am almost ashamed to say it, but nevertheless one must do that. So, since everything which is now in man, everything of interest, has been acquired, it can also be changed in the future. This makes the question of morality much more grave, of course, because there is no human nature.

**Student:** In that case, how can he talk about the necessity of freeing oneself from seeing things the way the herd would have you see them? Because no matter how you see them, it’s always going to be according to the cultural norms.

**LS:** But in the moment [inaudible] you remember “Of a Thousand and One Goal” in the *Zarathustra*? The last creation was the individual, i.e., the non-herd man. Well, if you are a non-herd man, you see that if you would try to become a herd man, you would lose what is best in you. That man could see it at all times is not so; this would be the Platonic-Aristotelian teaching, namely, that there are various ranks of human beings—and of course the lower ranks cannot understand the higher, but only the other way around, you know that? This cannot be Nietzsche’s view. But once there have been men who are true individuals, it is clear that by ceasing to be individuals, by becoming just members of the herd, they would give up their best and highest. They would cease to be true selves and would become non-selves, numbers.

**Student:** But [inaudible] even though he’s been criticizing all these religions and parodying certain types of morality, he points to some things in each of them which seem to be connected with what the true individual is going to be; and it’s very possible that they can lose this partial that they have. At the end of this chapter, he says it’s possible today [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, but do you mean to say that Christianity had something to do, or very much to do, with the emergence of true selves, and therefore that Nietzsche defeats himself by his anti-Christian crusade, if one can call it that?

**Student:** No, my only point was that not just Christianity, but also in the other examples he gives, men had—even if in an undeveloped state, but for example in 188, when he talks about the spirit which obedience had imposed upon these men, and which made them fight and [inaudible] it seems that this has nothing to do with whether it’s

---

<sup>xvi</sup> BGE 199. Kaufmann, 110.

Christianity or another morality, but they have lost the spirit, they've become mediocre [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, but in 188, precisely there, he says that one must obey for a very long time, but that does not mean forever. He also indicates that the true self would then go through the other stages indicated in the speech “On the Three Metamorphoses”: the lion and the child. I trust that you remember that. Now in the next section, in number 200, he speaks of the weak and the strong, but in the context of an age of disintegration, not unqualifiedly. Again, it is “a historical way of looking at it.” Here he uses the word nature without quotes, although only in the expression “in such a nature.” He can do that because it is made quite clear at the beginning of the aphorism that the natures in question are a product of a specific human situation; they are not what they are by nature.

[Number] 201: the herd morality is distinguished here also from the morality of the love of the neighbor. They are not identical because the herd morality by itself means full dedication to the commonwealth, as Nietzsche indicates by the example of early Rome. The morality of the love of the neighbor, Nietzsche says, emerges after the commonwealth has been made secure against external dangers. I believe that he is thinking of the Roman Empire having become secure by its extent, which was then the frame within which Christianity arose and expanded. Then he makes a point which is of some topical interest: that the love of the neighbor in its ordinary understanding leads eventually to the destruction of the herd morality itself (say, in the case where it takes the side of the criminal) and regards punishment as somehow unfair. Is it not sufficient to deprive him of his dangerousness? Why still punishing? Punishing itself is terrible. With this question, the herd morality, the morality of fear, draws its final conclusion. Well, whether Nietzsche interprets this correctly or not, the phenomenon that there are such people who think in this way cannot be doubted, I believe.

In number 202, there is a critique [inaudible] it is made clear, quite clear—if any doubt was possible before—that the critique of the herd and the herd instincts is meant to be a critique of the modern ideas. This insight into the character of the modern ideas is Nietzsche's insight, as he emphasizes here near the beginning of number 202. Very crudely stated: Nietzsche says that the modern, democratic, permissive ideas stem from Christianity. This was the suggestion of Tocqueville before him, but Nietzsche tries to trace it back to a more radical, natural root, as it were: the herd morality.

Finally, a word about number 203. Nietzsche opposes new values to the so-called eternal values of the tradition. “New values”: that seems to mean not *the* true values. Just because today people use all these words which in this form stem from Nietzsche without thinking carefully, of course, doesn't mean that in reading Nietzsche we have to assume that he didn't think about it. Could Nietzsche be satisfied with proposing new values without wondering whether they were the true values? That's the question. Now let us read the third sentence of number 203.

**Reader:** “To teach man the future of man . . . that has so far been called ‘history’—”



**LS:** Here, there is perfect agreement between Nietzsche and Marx. The pre-history, Marx calls it.

**Reader:** “the nonsense of the ‘greatest number’ . . . dwarfed by comparison.”<sup>xvii</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. We have read the main point. What Nietzsche prepares is not only *a* change from one kind of values to another kind; he is preparing *the* change from the rule of chance to the rule of man, of the human will. Since this is an absolute change, the question is whether this absolute change does not call also for *the* values as distinguished from merely new values. This we must keep in mind.

[end of session]

---

<sup>1</sup> Deleted “the cause of.”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “You have to read every aphorism in the context.”

---

<sup>xvii</sup> *BGE* 203. Kaufmann, 117.

## Session 9: no date

**Leo Strauss:** [Inaudible] mitigated only by the rapidity with which you read<sup>i</sup>. The subject which this chapter deals with is known to us already from our selections from the *Zarathustra* to some extent. You remember that the immaculate knowledge, symbolized by the moon, was compared with the sun, uncreative or creative; and as far nearer to practice, Zarathustra speaks of the superior men, one of whom is the man of conscience, the scientist, who is so conscientious that he limits himself entirely to the study of the brain of the leech. Do you remember that? But the fact is that even such an extreme specialist (who could perhaps also have been a specialist in linguistics for all we know; it is merely incidental) belongs to the superior men. That we must not forget. We will see this.

Nietzsche refers to the fact (I think you quoted this) that he speaks of his own experience, which is also the experience of a scholarly man. He was a classical scholar; what he would have achieved if he had been a classical scholar and remained one is unknowable, but it would surely have been as imposing, to say the least, as what he in fact did. At the same time, as I mentioned at the beginning, classical scholarship as it was then understood in Germany was *the* training for becoming a teacher, a high-school teacher. Now high school in this country and the *Gymnasium*, the humanistic *Gymnasium* in Germany, are very different things. Still, Nietzsche was caught from the very beginning—as soon as he began to teach (which was very early; he was 24 or so) he was caught between these two questions: Was he to be a scholar, an editor of texts, a commentator of texts, or whatever it may be? Or was he to be a former of human beings? In a way, the problem of Nietzsche is already inherent in this strange marriage of scholarship, teaching, and higher education, which was then characteristic of Germany and to some extent of Europe altogether. I think I will leave it at these remarks.

Let us turn to our assignment. Mr. [student] noted rightly the peculiarity of the title of this section: “We Scholars.” The next section is entitled “*Our* Virtues.” These are the only two cases in this in which the first person plural (or for that matter, the first person) occurs at all in a chapter heading. Nietzsche emphasizes by this title that he is a scholar, but that doesn’t mean that he is only a scholar. You also saw rightly that this chapter is prepared especially by two earlier aphorisms. [First], number 45, the opening paragraph of the section on religion, where Nietzsche is looking out for people who could be historians of religion, but comes to the conclusion that they are extremely rare, because a historian of religion would have to be able to understand the inner life of a man like Pascal. How can you expect that of a historian, generally speaking? Similarly, there was such a reference in number 186, the aphorism beginning chapter 5, where he demands a history of morality, one might say. But again, there is the question of what kind of man would be needed. Must a man who writes, say, a history of biblical morality not have a chord in himself that responds to the sayings of the prophets? He must have even more

---

<sup>i</sup> Strauss responds to a student’s paper, read at the start of the session. The reading was not recorded.

than that, according to Nietzsche, because he is not merely to listen to the prophets and to obey them, but to understand what is behind them, what moves them. The prophets, of course, say that it is God; but this is implicitly denied by Nietzsche along with scholarship along these lines. Therefore he would have to give a better explanation: what a responsible and almost impossible imposition on the poor man. The first question which one could raise is [this]: Why is such a section needed? Mr. [student] has given an answer, to some extent. We can perhaps say that we are concerned with the philosopher of the future (you remember the subtitle of the book), that the scholar is an indispensable ingredient of the philosopher of the future, and that therefore we must speak about the scholars. Let us read the beginning of the first paragraph.

**Reader:** “At the risk that moralizing . . . ranks of science and philosophy.”<sup>ii</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. The fact to which Nietzsche refers is, I believe, known to all of you. Philosophy was once supposed to be the queen of the sciences; today, and already in Nietzsche’s time to a considerable extent, she has become the handmaid of the sciences. The only respectable thing, so to speak, in the intellectual field is science, including also historical scholarship, and not philosophy. And philosophers are respectable only to the extent to which they are willing to be the handmaids, or male servants, of these serious enterprises—I mean the enterprises of the people who are in the front lines and not just of armchair physicists, you know, but of real physicists, of real historians and not of armchair historians, and so on. The beginning of this section regarding autonomous science and scholarship belongs, as is here stated, to the context of morality, because what Nietzsche does here, he says, is moralizing. Why is it moralizing? Because—as is also made clear in the first sentence—it is concerned with the order of rank of human possibilities. One can perhaps say that for Nietzsche a morality beyond good and evil, the morality with which he is concerned, is a morality concerned above all with the order of ranks of the various human possibilities.

Nietzsche goes on then to say (we cannot read the whole) that what has happened in the nineteenth century and is happening in the twentieth is a kind of declaration of independence on the part of scientists and scholars with regard to philosophy. Nietzsche traces this to the general processes of democratization, to the notion that there should be no hierarchy. Remember that when the term “elite” came to be used in political science (say, some decades ago) it was still resisted, because in a democracy, by definition there cannot be an elite. Today the word elite has been watered down so much that it can be used without any compunction, because what is the now prevailing definition of the elite?

**Student:** “Opinion-influencers” has been a nicely adapted version.

**LS:** I see. In other words, it has absolutely nothing to do with any intrinsic superiority.

**Student:** Unfortunately.

---

<sup>ii</sup> *BGE* 204. Kaufmann, 121.

**LS:** Yes. In other words, in its original meaning an elite means a selection, the cream. This has been deprived of its original, value-loaded meaning, and then of course it can be used, as happens to all these concepts—like culture, for example, which is no longer a value concept in any way, but everybody has a culture. A juvenile gang has as much a culture as anyone; maybe it is a subculture, but still a culture. This happens all the time. This observation about the process of general democratization that has taken place was in no way original to Nietzsche himself. The most important writer on this subject probably was Tocqueville, who had shown that such a process of leveling had been going on even before the French Revolution, and all the more in the nineteenth century. That the seamy side of democracy, if I may say so, plays a role in this connection, I think experience shows: You find this in the movies, when they present juvenile delinquents and try to show how excusable or pardonable their crime is by saying that this fellow felt that he wanted to be important, and since he couldn't be important in the legally open ways he tried to do it in an other way—you know, maybe by murdering, like this man in Texas who was posthumously, at least, on every front page in every newspaper in the country.<sup>iii</sup>

Of course, one must not overlook another point, which Nietzsche doesn't mention here although he surely knew of it, and that is (I spoke of this before) that science—especially in physics, but also in other areas, more or less—had succeeded in making steady and impressive progress, whereas philosophy could not show such a progress. That is up to the present day, of course, an important argument used. But Nietzsche could reply that it is exactly a consequence of the democratic value system that such things are considered success and so should be criteria in such matters. At any rate, the feeling of superiority on the part of the scientists and scholars is justified well enough by the decay of philosophy itself to, say, theory of knowledge—or one could say today, to linguistic analysis and other things. These latter are just other specialties treated in the same specialistic spirit as any other intellectual pursuit.

Nietzsche makes then clear from the very beginning that there is something questionable, in spite of all provocations and justifications, in the claim of science and scholarship to be *the* guide of man. Of course, in fairness to our contemporaries, we have to say that this claim has been abandoned for, say, the last generation at least, by virtue of the distinction between values and facts. They are competent regarding facts or regularities of behavior and so on; but they are no bit wiser than any bum in skid row as far as values are concerned. They know of more values than this bum knows because he has never lived on a Pacific island and seen that there can be other values. That is true, to that extent [inaudible] but as far as the question of which values are preferable to others, they are as ignorant as that bum. Therefore, what is the net result of this first aphorism? Implicitly at least, [that] there must be philosophy: *this* kind of thing will not do. But *can* there be philosophy *now*? This is the subject of number 205, which we might read.

**Reader:** “The dangers for a philosopher's development . . . not a question of conscience.”

---

<sup>iii</sup> Strauss may be referring to sniper Charles Whitman, who, from a tower at the University of Texas at Austin, killed 16 people in August 1966.

**LS:** In other words, Nietzsche simply rejects the possibility of the fellow who smells around everywhere and never acquires any competence anywhere, and yet, since he has smelled around everywhere, he is in a way more competent than any specialist because the specialist knows his leech's brain or whatever, and nothing else. But *this* fellow who knows a little of everything is utterly despicable; that is not the way out.

**Reader:** "Add to this . . . but about life and the value of life—"iv

**LS:** Whatever this may mean, the philosopher surely cannot be merely concerned with the sciences and therefore with theories of the sciences or epistemology. If he wants to be a philosopher, he has to know *all* manifestations, or essential manifestations, of life.

**Reader:** "that he is reluctant . . . lapses into silence."v

**LS:** Let us stop here, because what he says in the sequel is not so interesting: namely, that the ordinary view of the philosopher, according to which a philosophic life is a life of quietude and without dangerous experiences, is incorrect. We have heard of that before, in *Zarathustra*, "Of the Chairs of Virtue," remember? Philosophy understood as the way towards a sound sleep is contrasted to Nietzsche's understanding of philosophy as the highest degree of awakesness. So the philosophers are very unlikely today. If we remember earlier times, perhaps men like Bacon and Kant, especially—they were first-rate scientists (Leibniz I forgot; I'm sorry) who were in the front trenches and at the same time were philosophers of the first rank. This is no longer possible. That creates a great difficulty; whether there is any solution to this difficulty is a difficult question. In the next paragraph, Nietzsche speaks about the same question; read only the beginning.

**Reader:** "Compared to a genius—that is, to one who either *begets* or *gives birth*, taking both terms in their most elevated sense—the scholar, the scientific average man, always rather resembles an old maid: like her he is not conversant with the two most valuable functions of man."vi

**LS:** He speaks now here not of the philosopher, but of the genius. Nietzsche implies that only a genius can be a philosopher. This makes sense if we understand the philosopher as we should do, according to Plato and Aristotle, in its highest form. In other words, a professor of philosophy is as little a philosopher as a professor of English literature, say, is a poet; perhaps even less so. Well, you know this situation well enough, and Nietzsche states it in the strongest possible terms. The scientist—this is Nietzsche's point—or scholar is necessarily uncreative, which does not mean that he doesn't write books. This notion that writing books is identical with creativity is a more recent invention, and I hope we only have to mention it in order to dispose of it.

---

iv BGE 205. Kaufmann, 124.

v BGE 205. Kaufmann, 124.

vi BGE 206. Kaufmann, 125.

Creativity, by the way, is another word of a non-democratic origin which has become, in the bad sense of the word, democratized and therewith lost its meaning. If any bright or un-bright idea which occurs to anyone, even to a four-year-old child, is regarded a creative act, then it doesn't make sense any more to speak of creativity; one should abandon it. Exactly what is not done is for people to choose humble words for humble things. Today the general tendency is [the opposite], I believe perhaps more in this country than in Europe. I do not know that for sure, but I believe so on the basis of a remark which Mencken made about the American language. He gives the example of the American words modeled on "physician." I remember only "mortician," which is *almost* a physician, and so on. Mencken has a long article on this, which is quite instructive. It is possible that it has infected American social science also. One could say [that] well, there are no [inaudible] superior people are of no interest to social science because there are so few of them. That's an intelligible position. It deals with average men, but then one should also use language reasonably applicable to average men. Does this not make sense? There is something, as they say, fishy about the current usage.

Now Nietzsche turns to a deeper stratum of the same problem. Hitherto we got this impression, on the basis also of earlier passages to which Mr. [student] referred, that a philosopher is [inaudible] what was his statement about the memoirs, the personal memoirs [inaudible]?

**Student:** Involuntary and unconscious.

**LS:** Yes, philosophy is the memoirs of a philosopher. That's to say [that] philosophy is—again to use a now a fashionable expression—intensely personal, whereas a scholarly or scientific production does not necessarily have this character. If you have ever looked into a scholarly or scientific journal, you must have seen how impersonal these productions are most of the time. This is the background of what he says now, in 207.

**Reader:** "However gratefully we may welcome . . . and redemption and transfiguration."

**LS:** Let us stop here. The turn to objectivity is certainly understandable, for as Nietzsche puts it, "who has not at one time or other got sick and tired of his being he himself." Ipsissimosity is derived (I suppose the word has been coined by Nietzsche) from *ipse*, which means himself, and *ipsissimus* is the superlative: "altogether himself," "most himself." Ipsissimosity would be the noun formed from that. So yes, get rid of these strictly personal and tedious worries, or maybe pleasures, and turn to something more respectable. The term "objective spirit," "objective mind," has been coined as far as I know by Hegel and means, in contradistinction to the subjective mind, the [objective forms of mind]<sup>1</sup>, especially the state. Art and religion belong, according to Hegel, not to objective mind but to absolute mind. At any rate, Nietzsche here understands by "the objective mind" the mind which is active in science and scholarship, where not *who* said something and what his motivations and the prehistory of the thought are is in any way interesting, but whether he proved his point or not. Is this not, since time immemorial, the concern of objective man: Not, "who said it," but, "is it true"? To that extent, his

objective mind is perfectly reasonable. But there is also a danger. You can skip the rest of the sentence. “The objective man.”

**Reader:** “who no longer curses and scolds . . . lost on his plane and skin.”<sup>vii</sup>

**LS:** The key point is that he is in this way open, he is the objective reporter of *everything*, and is not interested in whether that thing which he reports deserves to be reported, or is intrinsically important or not.

**Reader:** “Whatever still remains . . . still more often disturbing—”

**LS:** Because the truth is the same for all, and therefore if a personal ingredient enters, then the truth is distorted. I remember a colleague, no longer alive—a very admirable man in his way, who wrote a book on democracy which I found very good, really. He asked me to review it, which I gladly did. Then I wrote about the book and, in praise of the book (I thought), [wrote] that this was the democracy of the farm and the workshop—meaning not of mere intellectuals. And this man, so strictly dedicated to the objective spirit, asked me to delete this passage because this had nothing to do with the argument. I happened to know that he was a farmer’s son, but I hadn’t meant this, of course. But this is the view in question: that everything personal is outside of science.

**Reader:** “to such an extent . . . he knows no more than he did yesterday . . . .”

**LS:** In other words, instead of worrying about his personal problem, he sees it only as an example of a general case; and, being a theoretical man, he is much more interested in the general case than in his wholly despicable private affairs. You must not overlook the respect which Nietzsche has for this type in spite of the simple attack.

**Reader:** “and tomorrow he knows no more . . . he is still ‘nature’ and ‘natural.’”<sup>viii</sup>

**LS:** Wait here. “Nature” and “natural” are in quotation marks. Let us say that the scholarly man, the objective man, has lost the ability to prefer and to reject. In the present state of social science, that does not need confirmation because of the explicit exclusion of value judgments, but this was already present in Nietzsche’s time. No ability to prefer or reject or, if one uses stronger language, to love or to hate, because that would be incompatible with objectivity. And precisely if someone is an honest scholar or scientist, a full-fledged scholar and scientist, he will have these qualities not only when he is in his study or in his classroom but they will permeate his whole being and he will be a man of this kind. Nietzsche says he can be genuine only to the extent to which he can be objective; only in his serene totalism—totalism meaning openness to everything equally, that’s the meaning here—is he still a nature and natural.

---

<sup>vii</sup> BGE 207. Kaufmann, 126-27.

<sup>viii</sup> BGE 207. Kaufmann, 127.

We see here from this usage that the genuine and its opposite, which is probably the spurious, take the place of the natural and unnatural. This is easy to understand. When people said in former times (and sometimes even now, I suppose): Be natural, they meant of course: Be yourself and do not affect to be something which you are not. This is a relic of the original meaning of natural and unnatural. This meaning of nature had already lost its justification in Nietzsche's time, and the basis is this: if nature is, as Nietzsche calls it, indifferent, then to behave affectedly is as natural as to behave unaffectedly. That is already developed very clearly in Spinoza's *Ethics*, so that is an old story. It became, of course, much more popular in the nineteenth century.

Therefore you need another distinction [inaudible] well, there is a school of thought—I do not know whether it still exists; it existed two or three decades ago—called naturalism. They<sup>ix</sup> say nature is not a term of distinction, which means in plain English that everything that is, is natural; so that, for example, the distinction between natural and artificial has no longer any importance because even an artifice, a machine or something, is of course also a body subject to the laws of physics, chemistry, and what have you. Nature is no longer a term of distinction; therefore people need another since we cannot live without distinguishing between the better and the worse. One possible substitute is the distinction between the genuine and the spurious, which Nietzsche here uses. This, I think, is a very significant passage. In the meantime, the distinction between genuine and spurious has become broadcast through existentialism. As far as I know, it did not have this importance earlier. Now, go on where we left off.

**Reader:** “His mirror soul . . . . Neither is he a model man—”

**Strauss:** No, “for.” I would translate that as “for”: for he is not perfect. So there are some cases in which he does despise; that is the meaning.

**Reader:** “For he is not perfect; he does not go . . . take sides for good or evil.”<sup>x</sup>

**LS:** This is the end of the diagnosis of this scientist and scholar. In our language, he is unable to make any value judgments. The ultimate basis for this is the concept of nature on which this modern enterprise is based, according to which, in a very powerful interpretation, to be means to be natural. Therefore, since the bad *are* as well as the good, since the mean *are* as well as the noble, both are equally natural. That is elementary, although it was not so clear in former times as it is now, because certain relics of the older notion of nature, according to which a man can live according to nature or against nature, were still powerful, at least until the end of the eighteenth century and in popular usage even beyond that time.

**Reader:** “When confusing him . . . the Caesarian cultivator—”

---

<sup>ix</sup> Presumably the Naturalists.

<sup>x</sup> *BGE* 207. Kaufmann, 127-28.



**LS:** How does he translate it? “Cultivator”? I would translate it as breeder. A *Züchter* is an animal breeder. How does he translate the next word?

**Reader:** “Cultural dynamo.”

**LS:** One could almost say, in order to make clear the extreme character of Nietzsche’s report, the tyrant.

**Student:** Perhaps “man of violence.”

**LS:** Yes, one could do that.

**Reader:** “one accorded him far too high . . . in himself nothing—almost nothing!”

**LS:** “*Presque rien*”—[inaudible] the quotation from Leibniz.

**Reader:** “The objective man is . . . in whom the *rest* of existence is justified—”<sup>xi</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. What Nietzsche wants then is this: to measure the scholar by the standard of the philosopher, but by the philosopher he presents here a man in whom the rest of existence is justified. That is very important. In a way, one could say that Plato meant that too by the philosopher; namely, insofar as what other men pursue, in all pursuits and activities in which they engage, appears on closer inspection to be a divination of philosophy. For example, there are erotic men, and who is the erotic man *par excellence*? Plato’s answer: the philosopher. There are just men, men dedicated to justice. Who is the just man *par excellence*? The philosopher. There are men given to gain, which was regarded at that time as something low and despicable. But who is the man best at acquiring gain? Answer: the philosopher. They all converge somewhat. In a way, one could say that even according to Plato, the philosopher justifies the other existences to the extent that only in him is there the possibility (at least on earth) of knowledge of the whole.

Be this as it may, we have to come back to this question. It is certainly a strange definition of the philosopher, “Caesarian breeder” and “man of violence of culture.” Was there ever such a man? After all, Nietzsche referred to experience and he has to help us a bit by pointing to some experiences which can help us understand his proposals. No, there was none like that, we can say; and he can speak of it, as is shown by the subtitle, because he deals with the philosophy and hence the philosopher of the future. This man, who is the highest possible man—something like the superman—is the man who ends the epoch of chance and senselessness, bringing about the true rule of man, the conscious rule of man.

In the next paragraph, Nietzsche makes clear an implication of what he had said, namely, that the philosopher as *he* understands him is not a skeptic. He explains here what he

---

<sup>xi</sup> BGE 207. Kaufmann, 128.

means by skepticism: a paralysis of the will, a man who cannot say yes or no because these are value judgments and he cannot do that. But it is a paralysis of the will, and it is the prevailing mood in Europe (this was written in 1886 or so). He gives other examples of this paralysis of the will. For example, “*l’art pour l’art*,” “art for art’s sake”—meaning, not art in the service of human life. This view is another form of this decadence. And he gives a survey of the various European notions, which are more or less ill. The French are worst in this respect; the Germans are slightly better, according to Nietzsche; but much better is the situation in England, Spain, and Corsica. In England this has something to do with phlegm, and in Corsica with hard skulls, which you will understand properly.

The main point at which he ultimately arrives here is that the greatest strength of will is in Russia; and Nietzsche has in a way the hope that this Russian superiority will compel Europe to stop with its internecine wars and idiocies and become a united Europe—which has become in the meantime a very popular demand. (Only de Gaulle’s remembering, the fatherland acts against it—you know, “*l’Europe des patries*,” “the Europe of the fatherlands”—and the question is whether the fatherlands, and especially his fatherland, should not be the core of that united Europe.) At any rate, this is part of the philosophy of the future; every philosophy has a peculiar political or social basis, and the basis with a view to which, or in the expectation of which, Nietzsche wrote this book was the united Europe. That doesn’t mean the United Nations by a long shot; but still, Nietzsche has divined something here.

After having discussed briefly what Nietzsche understands by skepticism, he refers to another kind of skepticism, namely—Mr. [student] read the crucial passage—“this skepticism,” in the middle of the paragraph.

**Reader:** “This skepticism despises and nevertheless seizes . . . historical mistrust.”<sup>xii</sup>

**LS:** In other words, this great movement around 1800, from which modern history emerged (i.e. historical criticism) or reached a new peak, is another kind of skepticism. Nietzsche approves of it, although he makes clear in the sequel that skepticism can only be one ingredient among many—even the good, strong skepticism. The story about Frederick the Great and so on to which Nietzsche refers was elementary school knowledge in Germany. I cannot expect you to know the complicated relations between Frederick the Great and his father, but if you want to indulge yourself, I advise you to read Macaulay’s essay on Frederick the Great, which is very amusing. He gives, if I remember well, this formula: that the difference between father and son was that Frederick, as distinguished from his father, needed occasion in addition to proximity for kicking people. You will laugh more than once when you read that, and yet it is a serious question.

Nietzsche stresses in number 210 that skepticism is only an ingredient of the philosopher; also the critic (here, of course, not meaning merely literary critic), in contradistinction to

---

<sup>xii</sup> BGE 209. Kaufmann, 132.

the skeptic, is only an ingredient. Let us read the last sentence of aphorism 210, or the sentence before.

**Reader:** “This evaluation of philosophy . . . titles of his major works)—”

**LS:** *Critique of Pure Reason*, and so on.

**Reader:** “our new philosophers . . . merely a great critic.—”<sup>xiii</sup>

**LS:** That is, of course, Kant; and he is called “the Chinese,” because he had still . . . what do you call that?

**Student:** The pigtail.

**LS:** Pigtail, yes. Now, number 211 we should read as a whole.

**Reader:** “I insist that people . . . from a nook into every expanse.”<sup>xiv</sup>

**LS:** This is of course a fantastic demand, if we think it is addressed to us. But if we think of other people, what Hegel did in his *Phenomenology of the Mind* is in a way what Nietzsche did here: to understand *every* human possibility—not, of course, the uninteresting details, but the important ones.

**Reader:** “But all these . . . *political* (moral) thought or *art*—”

**LS:** You see “political” and then “moral” in brackets. I referred to that; that’s very characteristic. “Political” and “moral” are fundamentally the same for Nietzsche, which doesn’t mean that “moral” means here, say, traditional morality. There are *n* moralities.

**Reader:** “some great data . . . every tough will can certainly find satisfaction.”

**LS:** Again, one cannot but think of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* (and to some extent also his other writings), in which every human possibility that ever was, was overcome, condensed, and understood by Hegel—at least according to Hegel’s claim.

**Reader:** “Genuine philosophers, however . . . ‘*thus it shall be*.’”

**LS:** No, “it ought to be.”

**Reader:** “They first determine . . . all who have overcome the past.”

**LS:** Now he gives them the *epitheton onans* of “philosophic laborers”; he means now the really good scholars and scientists.

---

<sup>xiii</sup> BGE 210. Kaufmann, 135.

<sup>xiv</sup> BGE 211. Kaufmann, 136.

**Reader:** “With a creative hand . . . *Must* there not be such philosophers?—”<sup>xv</sup>

**LS:** In other words, an entirely new kind of philosopher is called for in this extreme situation of the world, i.e., of the Western world. There is a remark of the early Marx which has something to do with what Nietzsche says here, but it is by no means identical. In Marx’s famous *Theses on Feuerbach*, number 11, Marx says: “The philosophers have not done more than to interpret the world in different ways; but what is called for is to change it.”<sup>xvi</sup> Marx characteristically doesn’t say that the change should be done by philosophers: it will be done by the proletariat. Philosophy is out, that is finished with Hegel. Still, there is something not negligible common to Nietzsche and Marx. The difference of course is that for Nietzsche it is [in] *precisely* the [same] situation, where for the first time it seems the philosopher will consciously create values, to use his language, whereas the older philosophers simply codified and thus modified the values of their society. Why does he need these philosophic workers as his helpers? Because in order to give laws, to establish the values for the future, one must know the present and the past; without that, it could simply be a repetition of something already condemned by history, so to speak. Therefore, only on the basis of the most profound knowledge of history hitherto is it possible to do that job properly. Let us read the beginning of the next number.

**Reader:** “More and more . . . of a new untrodden way to his enhancement.”

**LS:** Let us stop here for one moment. Nietzsche now retracts to some extent what he said in the preceding paragraph. He points out that, in a way, *all* philosophers of the past did the same [as] what he was doing. All philosophers did in a way, each in his time, what Nietzsche demands; and this implies something more. In other words, Plato did not merely codify a certain *polis* morality, but he created a tradition which molded the world, the Western and the Near Eastern world, for millennia.

But another important point here is this: if every philosopher establishes [inaudible] is a critic of the ideal of today and thus prepares the ideal of tomorrow, would this not also apply to Nietzsche? Would Nietzsche’s philosophy not be relative to the late nineteenth century, or let us say early twentieth century, and is therefore to be followed up at a later date by someone who will deviate from Nietzsche considerably? Nietzsche doesn’t at all say here that these values set up by the philosopher are in any way proposed, imposed, suggested by nature—not a word of it. He speaks only of the creative activity of the philosopher. Let us see a little bit later in this paragraph: “Today the taste.”

**Reader:** “the taste of the time . . . floods and tidal waves of selfishness.”<sup>xvii</sup>

---

<sup>xv</sup> BGE 211. Kaufmann, 136.

<sup>xvi</sup> Strauss’s translation.

<sup>xvii</sup> BGE 212. Kaufmann, 137-38.

**LS:** “With *as* much right.” Nietzsche couldn’t go further in saying that his philosophy of the future is the philosophy of the immanent future, and not *the* true teaching. That is what we call historicism. Now, read again a little bit later, after he has spoken of Socrates.

**Reader:** “Today, conversely, when only the herd animal . . . today, the concept of greatness—”<sup>xviii</sup>

**LS:** And so on. I am now interested only in this reference to the “today.” Read a few words [from] about the last paragraph, 213, after the center: “Ultimately, there is an.”

**Reader:** “an order of rank among states of the soul . . . height and power of his spirituality.”

**LS:** This is one of the many references to the order of rank. The question is whether this order of rank [is] itself historically variable, or is it natural (a question which we may take up later). And “for every high world one must be born,” do you have that?

**Reader:** “For every high world . . . must be *cultivated* for it—”

**LS:** *Bred* for it. Bred, the word also was used for animal breeding. Well, you also say “man of good breeding” in English.

**Reader:** “a right to philosophy . . . acquired, nurtured, inherited—”

**LS:** And so on. Here Nietzsche touches on the question which you know from Plato especially, that philosophy requires a specific nature: the *physis* of the philosopher. That is developed especially in Books 5 to 7 of the *Republic*, in three parallel passages. Nietzsche admits this, but he uses a different term: the rank of a man is determined by “descent,” by “breeding.” Or to use the key word here, the “nature” which a man must possess in order to be able to philosophize must have been *acquired* by a long process of happy marriages, marriages of the right kind of people, and so on and so on. The difficulty is only that Nietzsche, in order to state this, has to rely on all kinds of theories as to how a good nature, a good *physis*, is brought about, whereas Plato is more empirical and says [that] as a matter of fact, we find a difference of natures: some are better, some are worse, and only the best kind is good for philosophy. About how this came about, there is no hypothesis. It is not necessary. The practically important question is, for the educator especially, to recognize the natures; and for the individual himself, of course, to try to get clarity about what is and what is not beyond his abilities. I thank Mr. [student] again . . .

[end of tape]

---

<sup>xviii</sup> BGE 212. Kaufmann, 138.

---

<sup>1</sup> Changed from “objectifications.”

## Session 10: no date

**Leo Strauss:** [Inaudible] try to notice how the central problem entailed by the understanding of philosophy as creating values—namely, the relation of the interpretation of the text—is qualified by the aspiration to create values politically, i.e., to create values for the *polis*. But the question is: Is it qualified by that? Is this not precisely a point: That if the philosopher is as such the legislator, can you make a distinction between them which you can make in the case of Plato or Aristotle? That’s the question. And now there is one more point on page 5, where I also set a question mark. I think that I still do. Will you pass this paper on? Today I get only one paper.<sup>i</sup>

[Inaudible] you gave us a kind of table of contents of these aphorisms of chapter 7, and you did not make clear the connection. For example, what is the meaning of this men/women section at the end of the book? More simply, the chapter has the title “Our Virtues.” What are “our virtues,” according to Nietzsche? Nietzsche refers to “our virtues” a few times within the chapter; if you had concentrated on that, it would have been very helpful. Now, which are “our virtues” mentioned within the chapter?

**Student:** One is honesty.

**LS:** “Honesty” is of course not a good translation; the meaning is intellectual probity. He doesn’t mean that you don’t steal silver spoons or that kind of thing; he means intellectual probity. That is one. And he says—you referred to this, but with some hesitation, I noticed—that probity is the *only* virtue which we still have. But he refers to another virtue also; he even calls it “our *great* virtue.” And what is that? It’s not probity, at least not as such. It is the historical sense. If you had made this the center, it would have been more helpful. Quite a few things which he says in this chapter in criticism of utilitarianism, hedonism, and so on, are things which we know more or less already from the earlier chapters of *Beyond Good and Evil*, if not from our selections from the *Zarathustra*. The historical sense, you quoted this passage . . . can you repeat Nietzsche’s definition of it here?

**Student:** “the capacity for quickly guessing . . . a human being has lived . . . .”<sup>ii</sup>

**LS:** Yes, and so on. So did Nietzsche give us an example of this kind of historical sense in what we have read in this course, of this divination of the very core of what is now called a culture?

**Student:** [Inaudible]

**LS:** “Of One Thousand and One Goal,” in *Zarathustra*, where he gives a one-sentence description of the Jew, the Greeks, the Persians, and the . . . yes, that is exactly it. Now

<sup>i</sup> Strauss responds to a student’s paper, read at the start of the session. The reading was not recorded.

<sup>ii</sup> *BGE* 224. Kaufmann, 151.

there is another point which struck me in your paper, regarding Flaubert. What is the defect of Flaubert, according to Nietzsche?

**Student:** As I understood it, he concentrated so heavily on what Nietzsche referred to as bourgeois stupidity that he eventually lost the ability to see other things beyond this.

**LS:** Yes. Do you know the work of Flaubert, or the part of the work that Nietzsche has in mind particularly? Well, I think it applies especially to a work which Flaubert did not finish, *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (I do not know whether you know it), which is a kind of survey of the efforts of the nineteenth century in all fields, and in which there are two small employees who meet at the banks of the Seine and become friends. One of them has a small fortune. They retire, and then they begin to study all fields (science, and history, and what have you) and their readings are collected, as it were. Their migration through all these fields of study, and the whole stupidity—not of these poor men, but of the famous authors (people now forgotten, presumably) from whom they quote, has to be read. And Flaubert derived a kind of bitter enjoyment from the contemplation of human stupidity. He also made a collection of poems written by rural doctors; this is another aspect of the same tendency in Flaubert.

But Nietzsche's objection against Flaubert goes deeper, although this is not recognizable from this reference to Flaubert. Flaubert's judgment on the nineteenth century is as negative, one can say, as that of Nietzsche. But Flaubert is altogether hopeless. I think the document of that is Flaubert's most famous novel, *Madame Bovary*, considered toward its end, when Emma's life has been a complete failure and she has committed suicide; and she is in her coffin and she can of course not say anything, and then a priest stands on the one side and a pharmacist (a representative of the French revolution and progress) on the other, and they have a very excited conversation. They are *the* men who occupy the scene, and the dead Emma, with the complete failure of her life, is a tacit refutation of both positions. There is no hope, only longing for something lost, as would appear from his parallel novel, *Salammô*. This is the point that Flaubert sees on the basis of the nineteenth century: nothing but despair, pessimism, and a weak longing for something which exists in the past. This is exactly what Nietzsche tries to oppose.

The question which you raised at the beginning, perhaps in these words, is this: Book 6 dealt with "We Scholars"; chapter 7 deals with "Our Virtues." Are the two "we's" identical or different?

**Student:** My understanding would be that they'd be different in some sense.

**LS:** In some sense. But there is a certain [inaudible] when he says for example that "our great virtue" (in chapter 7) is the historical sense, then he refers to the same people of whom he had spoken in chapter 6. Also when he says "intellectual honesty," the only virtue which we still have, he also refers to the scholars. Remember from the *Zarathustra*, the man studying the brain of the leech is also a man of intellectual probity who, out of intellectual probity or honesty, becomes an extreme specialist because everything else would be dishonest, would be to be a fake scholar. On the other hand,



there are doubtless some [places]<sup>1</sup> where “we” does not mean “we men of the nineteenth century,” but “we philosophers of the future,” and then it means something different.

Now, lest we have no time for the most important passages in this chapter, we will begin rather late, and then if we have time we may return to the earlier sections. We will begin perhaps with number 229. But do you have any point which you would like to raise now? Anyone else?

**Student:** With regard to the section on Flaubert, I’m curious why the words “norm” and “exception” are in quotation marks; does that indicate he doesn’t [inaudible].

**LS:** In which section is that?

**Student:** 218.

**LS:** “Rule” and “exception” are in quotation marks, yes. Well, it could mean this: What is here called the exception (and therefore abnormal), is this not the true norm, the highest man? In other words, he surely thinks the distinction between a rule and exception as ordinarily used can be used by thoughtful men only with quotation marks, and must be reconsidered.

[Number] 229 (I think we will start there) begins with a critique of humanitarianism, and this follows on the critique of utilitarianism in the preceding paragraph. What he says about utilitarianism towards the end of 228 is this: they try to take up the case of egoism as a matter of general welfare. In other words, the Utilitarians, say men like Bentham,<sup>iii</sup> are in a way so free from the simple moral prejudice which identifies goodness with altruism that they start from egoism. But then, by some sleight of hand, they find out that the private good is identical with the common good, and therefore their “immoralism” is a very half-hearted thing.

Now in number 229, he criticizes humanitarianism and this leads to a defense of cruelty. This is one of the most well-known and quite justifiably disliked things in Nietzsche, which can partly be understood by reference to the polemical character of his thought. Nietzsche opposes the morality of compassion. This has a long prehistory, but there is one man of the first order who tried to identify goodness with compassion. You know who that is?

**Student:** Rousseau.

**LS:** Rousseau, yes. In Rousseau, there is this connection. There are two fundamental urges of man, one can say: one is self-preservation, the strictly egoistic one; and second, compassion mitigating the demands of self-preservation. Nietzsche changes this (whether he was fully conscious of this connection or not, I do not know). Self-preservation is, as it

---

<sup>iii</sup> Jeremy Bentham (b. 1748): English jurist, reformer, and philosopher; a founder of Utilitarianism.

were, replaced by the will to power, which means not merely self-preservation but self-enhancement, self-heightening. Correspondingly, compassion is replaced by cruelty. That is a formula which makes sense, but Nietzsche is concerned less with cruelty per se, or with a recommendation of cruelty, but with one special kind of cruelty. This he says, towards the end of number 229, after he has mentioned *Tristan and Isolde* [inaudible].

**Reader:** “To see this we must . . . cruelty turned *against oneself*.”<sup>iv</sup>

**LS:** Now, if we would try to express this thought less shockingly, what does he refer to when speaking of cruelty against oneself? Which phenomenon does he have in mind?

**Student:** In Aristotle’s terms, you might call it “continence.”

**LS:** No, continence simply means self-control regarding food, drink, and so on. That has very little to do with what he [inaudible].

**Student:** Asceticism.

**LS:** Yes, but one particular phenomenon of which Nietzsche had spoken before in this chapter.

**Student:** Conscience.

**LS:** More specifically, probity, intellectual probity. That is what he has in mind. Let us go on where we left off, Mr. [student].

**Reader:** “Finally consider that even . . . there is a drop of cruelty.”

**LS:** Here we have [inaudible] this knowledge, this desire for knowledge, is opposed to the fundamental will of the mind or spirit; and that is the only interesting phenomenon regarding cruelty, so to speak. There is the fundamental will of the mind, that which the mind aspires to; that of course is in itself pleasant because that is the will—the natural will, we could almost say—of the spirit. And yet counteracting it, fighting it, this is a kind of cruelty turned against oneself. But what is this fundamental will of the spirit, according to Nietzsche?

**Student:** Laziness; the desire to be <sup>2</sup>superficial.

**LS:** Yes, sure; but in the fullest meaning of that term, what is that fundamental will?

**Student:** Will to power?

---

<sup>iv</sup> BGE 229. Kaufmann, 159.

**LS:** Yes, and especially the most spiritual will to power, which is philosophy, as we have seen. Here, suddenly, we see that the desire for knowledge is *opposed* to the will to power. What sense does this make? It's a very great difficulty.

**Student:** Does it tie up with this other thing, that every philosophy conceals a philosophy behind it, every ground [inaudible].

**LS:** All right, but then the will to knowledge means [inaudible].

**Student:** [Inaudible] is never to stop at a formulation, but to get at the formulation behind the formulation.

**LS:** No, but to take his formula, it is an ass, a strong and beautiful ass. That is the fundamental will. But the will to knowledge opposes that and says, "the fact that this is my deepest conviction does not impress me at all": that is a further reason for questioning it, for opposing it.

**Student:** The will to power is essentially partial, the will to *my* power; the will to knowledge is universal, and I have to renounce my partiality [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, that is another way of putting the same thing. Nevertheless, there is a great difficulty because, according to Nietzsche, the highest form of the desire for knowledge, philosophy, is the most spiritual form of the will to power. This is the great difficulty. You don't understand it—well, rightly so.

**Student:** He tells us that the basic will of the mind is the will toward illusion [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, but is not this the same as the will [inaudible] what is that? The will to power is the will to impose your stamp on the matter; and is this not *the* delusion, the delusion which your will to power requires?

**Student:** Is every philosophy, because it is personal, an illusion?

**LS:** In a way, yes. On the other hand, what you keep if you disregard this personal aspect, as you call it, is—if you are radical enough in that—nothing but chaos, because even the scientific world is based on a certain fundamental delusion.

**Student:** At this point that we just arrived at, isn't in a sense Nietzsche doing the same thing he accuses the previous philosophers of doing, i.e., establishing a will to truth?

**LS:** Yes, that is true. You mean he accepts the will to truth? Yes, but only he says it is a questionable thing, whereas the traditional view was that the will to truth is in perfect harmony with everything respectable in man; that he questions.

**Student:** In paragraph 229, do you think that the will to truth is made to seem better than the will to power? I.e., the desire for power [inaudible].

**LS:** That is not decided here. What Nietzsche establishes here is only that the will to truth is the most sublime form of cruelty, not more than that; whether it is superior or inferior to what he calls the fundamental will is not decided here.

**Student:** First, it seems that Nietzsche is doing the same thing as previous philosophers, in establishing the will to truth; I assume you're referring to his [inaudible] in the first chapter. He radically changes the nature of truth in [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes and no. To some extent he preserves it, he only judges it differently; whereas, according to him, all previous philosophers took the will to truth for granted, he questions it. But in doing so, he understands by the will to truth exactly what the other philosophers have understood by it, is it not so? Only he says no, or at least puts a question mark where they put an exclamation mark. Still, the thing about which he speaks and they spoke is the same.

**Student:** But then the question is: Why did the will to truth of the earlier philosophers lead him into what was not truth at all, but a disguised attempt [inaudible]?

**LS:** Yes, sure, that is one of the infinite difficulties to which we will come; we have to turn to the next paragraph to get some greater clarity. Now, number 230; we cannot possibly [inaudible]. He speaks here again of this [inaudible] well, let us take the second half of number 230: "To *this* will toward."

**Reader:** "mere appearance, to simplification . . . severe discipline, as well as severe words."<sup>v</sup>

**LS:** Now, skip a bit to "but we"—two sentences or so. "But we hermits."

**Reader:** "hermits and marmots have long persuaded . . . the basic text of *homo natura*—"

**LS:** The terrible basic text.

**Reader:** "the terrible basic text of *homo natura* must again . . . find no better answer—"<sup>vi</sup>

**LS:** Good. Let us leave it at this riddle for a moment. The point which is clear is this: man is to be retranslated into nature, as Nietzsche calls it here. You might read in *The Gay Science* (or whatever the translation of that is), number 109. Let us say this: Nietzsche wants to make man natural again; this requires that man be seen as a natural being and not metaphysically. These were of course trivialities, in a way, already in the nineteenth century. But the difficulty in Nietzsche is that he also wants, as we know, the humanization of nature. The humanization of nature consists in interpreting nature in the richest and fullest possible interpretation of nature, of which we have heard a bit in the earlier chapters.

---

<sup>v</sup> BGE 230. Kaufmann, 160-61.

<sup>vi</sup> BGE 230. Kaufmann, 161.

How can these two opposite tendencies be brought into harmony? The task is to make man altogether natural; he was not natural not only because of Christianity and any other otherworldly notion of men, although this would be the first of [inaudible] but fundamentally man did not see himself as he is, and therefore *was* not truly what he is because of these interpretations, because of these delusions. Interpretations are at the same time delusions. This is the great difficulty. You will have observed here that now Nietzsche speaks of nature without any quotation marks; this is remarkable compared with earlier procedure.

Now Nietzsche tries to humanize nature, to interpret nature, and to accept this humanized nature as nature and not merely the nature of modern physics, compared with which all other qualities—secondary, tertiary, and whatever—are not truly natural but a human addition to it. The highest form of this humanization is the conscious humanization. Men have always anthropomorphized nature by imputing to it a teleology or any other thing. But the belief was that they saw nature as it is; they did not see that they were imputing something to nature, putting this stamp on nature. Now it must be done consciously. This is, in other words, what Nietzsche also calls the overcoming of chance. Hitherto the whole of history has been chance, senselessness. And now man should become the conscious controller and ruler of his future; those are the same thing. But this effort presupposes that it is realized that the essence of man is will to power. In other words, whereas hitherto men believed that the values which they cherished were imposed on them by God or gods, or nature, or reason, now men realize that they are in all cases his creation, and therefore that the essence of man is the imposing of values, is the will to power. Only through knowing his essence will man become natural—that is to say, no longer be under the spell of illusions. But can man reach full knowledge of himself, as this project of Nietzsche seems to presuppose? Or, more particularly, can the individual human being reach full knowledge of himself? And now let us read number 231.

**Reader:** “Learning changes us . . . signposts to the problem we *are*—”

**LS:** In other words, not to the problem with which we deal, whether that is knowledge, or whatever that may be.

**Reader:** “rather, to the great . . . what is *unteachable* very ‘deep down.’”<sup>vii</sup>

**LS:** This is of course not new to us: consider number 8 (the brief aphorism which we read earlier, which you will remember), about the donkey. In other words, we cannot know—that is implied—that there is something in us unteachable, the ultimate; we cannot truly know that [even if] we can have some awareness of it.

**Reader:** “After this abundant civility . . . after all only—*my* truths.”<sup>viii</sup>

---

<sup>vii</sup> BGE 321. Kaufmann, 162.

<sup>viii</sup> BGE 231. Kaufmann, 162.

**LS:** That is the inevitable consequence: If all knowledge depends ultimately on something unteachable deep down below in me, in the individual, then there can only be *my* truth, and not *the* truth. It is a slightly clumsy transition, as you will have observed, to the theme of man and woman. We do not have to read these things. One can say these following aphorisms deal with the reaction of Nietzsche's nature to the question of the nature of woman. The terms related to "nature" are either completely or almost completely avoided (not quite). Let us read the sole passage where he mentions nature, in the last number, 239, toward the end. "That which."

**Reader:** "What inspires respect for woman, and often enough even fear, is her *nature*—"

**LS:** Underlined now—and, of course, without quotation marks.

**Reader:** "which is more 'natural' than man's . . . ."<sup>ix</sup>

**LS:** We can leave it at that. Here "natural" is again used in quotation marks. This shows again the problem of nature, that nature means something different in the two cases. At any rate, the chapter on "Our Virtues," with which we are dealing, ends in an honest presentation of the difficulty, of the fundamental difficulty. Now, whatever one might think about Nietzsche's remarks about women, which are not in accordance with the generally accepted view, there are some points which have a certain plausibility. For example, number 232, the second half. Women who desire equality of rights, equal access to all professions, and so on. "If a woman."

**Reader:** "Unless a woman seeks a new adornment . . . part of the Eternal-Feminine?"<sup>x</sup>

**LS:** Let us leave it at that. In other words, is this desire for adornment not more characteristic of the beautiful sex than of the opposite sex? This is a plausible question. If that is so, is this not bound to have infinite consequences also in the professions, including scholarship, and so on? That is a question which I think is fair.

**Student:** With respect to this honesty, which in the last three epigrams is pushed to extremes: what does this do to scholarship? In other words, what effect does being perfectly honest, one's recognition that trees are *my* trees, not *the* trees [inaudible]?

**LS:** All right; that's a very good question. The scholar does not have *his* truth. He seeks and to some extent he finds the truth for everyone, the objective truth. But the question is: How important is the objective truth? Is it not always based on ultimate premises of which the scholar or scientist is not necessarily aware, and which are the fundamental questions which the philosopher must face? Now, I would like to discuss this briefly with you, this question which came to our attention in numbers 229 and 230: the relation of the will to truth to the will to power. The will to truth—that is what animates the scholar and scientist, of course—is the will to see things as they are. You remember the quotation

---

<sup>ix</sup> BGE 239. Kaufmann, 169.

<sup>x</sup> BGE 232. Kaufmann, 163.

from Stendhal, when he speaks of a successful banker as a very good starting point for seeing things as they are, because he has seen all kinds of aspects of human nature which we innocent people are not likely to become aware of. So the will to truth is the will to see what is.

The will to power is the will to put one's stamp on the matter, ultimately on that chaos which is the only thing given. At first glance the will to truth has nothing to do with the will to power. But if the essence of man is the will to power, then the will to truth must be understood as a modification of the will to power. Nietzsche is trying to do that by saying that the will to truth is the will to power which turns against itself, "the most spiritual will to power," he also says. Whether this is convincing or not is another matter. But from which point of view is this difficulty of Nietzsche, this concern of Nietzsche, a concern of us, who do not necessarily believe that the essence of being is the will to power? We have to remind ourselves again of a thesis repeated by Nietzsche more than once, that all knowledge, including that of modern physics, is interpretation. That's to say, it gives a meaning which is not necessarily *the* meaning. Philosophy, or science, is quest for knowledge of *the* truth. But all knowledge, all truth, depends on absolute presuppositions which vary from epoch to epoch and to *some* extent even from individual to individual. This is the famous thesis of historicism, and that of course is Nietzsche's concern. And now this question arises: Is this insight that all knowledge or all truth depends on absolute presuppositions which vary from epoch to epoch, is this insight *the* truth, and not also one interpretation? This is inevitable, because if it is *the* truth then we maintain fundamentally the traditional knowledge of truth, although the content is quite different. This difficulty, I think, is at the bottom of Nietzsche's hesitations throughout his work.

**Student:** In a sense, it's what I said before, that the radical change is in demanding the will to truth; it's a different type of demand than the demand the early philosophers made, because for Nietzsche, the will to truth is closer to the will to power, and it's more a process than to find things which are [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, but on the other hand, for example, if you consider more specifically what Nietzsche does, you see that he is satisfied that there is a need for "new values," as he puts it; and the justification of this assertion is an analysis of present-day Europe (I mean Europe in his time). This analysis of present-day Europe is a kind of self-knowledge insofar as every contemporary belongs to that time. This is knowledge in the ordinary sense of the term. For example, when Nietzsche makes certain observations regarding the decline of the social power of biblical religion, this is something which even a sociologist could study. The sociologist would not probably use the most incisive criteria, but this is only a matter of degree. One could perhaps persuade the sociologist from time to time that he should be a bit more thoughtful and not limit himself to the externals which the meanest capacity could observe without the least effort. Depth, they call it now. There is here knowledge [inaudible] objective knowledge, scientific knowledge is to some extent integrated by Nietzsche. Only Nietzsche says that if you know these facts, then you are up against a question which transcends this kind of objective investigation where philosophy itself comes in, and which of course will then affect also the interpretation of the facts. Does this not make sense? For example, a sociologist may establish that there is

a decline of the influence of biblical morality. Simply stated: what was regarded as proper conduct in various matters in former times, and what is now; that can be done by studying novels and what have you—films, popular culture, etc. You can do that. And yet, how to judge that? Is this a kind of liberation from millennia of prejudices, or is it something which does great harm to men? This will already lead beyond objective knowledge understood narrowly. But the fundamental difficulty is this: Is Nietzsche not compelled (and is everybody not compelled) eventually to assert something as true in the traditional sense of truth? That is, truth as finding out what is, in contradistinction from putting one's stamp on something or creating it—adequation of the intellect to the thing, as the old definition was, in contradistinction to constructing something. That is the question, I believe, that underlies these difficulties.

**Student:** Might his attitude toward intellectual probity be an argument for Nietzsche's siding with the will to truth as opposed to simply the will to power? Because doesn't his high praise for intellectual probity indicate that finally he is concerned with getting at the truth even more than the will asserting itself?

**LS:** Yes, sure. Therefore he speaks of the opposition of the will of the knower to his fundamental will. The fundamental will would be the will to power to put its stamp on it. And the solution would probably be, of course, a reconciliation of the two: namely, in probity, i.e., in full clarity, without any self-deception about what one is doing and what drives us to do it, to put that stamp on it. It would be, say, an awareness of the great danger of modern man without any concealment, *and* also about the various motives, some not so noble and others perhaps noble, which motivate individual thinkers nevertheless to make this leap. The fundamental point, nevertheless, I believe is the one which I stated before.

One of the ingredients of this new philosophy is, as we have said more than once, a historical sense. We might perhaps consider number 224, which deals explicitly with this. Nietzsche had already spoken of that in number 223, and made clear the moral need underlying this kind of historicism that he has in mind. We can read the beginning of 223.

**Reader:** "The hybrid European . . . he soon notices that not one fits him very well—"<sup>xi</sup>

**LS:** And so on. Then he speaks of the famous decay of taste particularly visible, perhaps, in architecture in the last thirty to forty years of the last century. In other words, what Nietzsche discerns behind that—in historical novels, in the whole historical pageants made in these centuries, for example; also in painting—[is] a flight from the present. So these ugly or distasteful things have a tolerably respectable source: they see the ugliness of the present and try to escape into a higher past. Of course they fail in that, because—and this is one of the other key points for Nietzsche—this return to the past, this flight to the past that is the characteristic and the misfortune of Romanticism is a longing for something lost but no longer restorable. Now, number 224.

---

<sup>xi</sup> *BGE* 223. Kaufmann, 150.



**Reader:** “The *historical sense* . . . knows this sense, as its sixth sense.”

**LS:** That is another emphasis again. The historical sense is something new, and Nietzsche is the first philosopher, according to his claim, who philosophizes on the basis of it and, in a sense, against it. Today that has become elementary, perhaps only lightly concealed by the still-existing positivistic attempt to discover laws of society which are not historically changeable. Ideally<sup>xii</sup>, I think, this goal has still survived.

**Reader:** “The past of every form . . . ‘the spirit’ sees its advantage in this.”<sup>xiii</sup>

**LS:** In other words, this half-barbarism has certain intellectual advantages: namely, we understand more than former generations did. Think only of what people wrote about, say, Greece, about barbarians generally speaking, or what a Frenchman of the seventeenth century would have written on extra-European cultures, and so on. The point which Nietzsche makes in the sequel [inaudible]. So we understand these things, and especially the incomplete cultures, what now would probably be called “underdeveloped” cultures, although it’s not quite the same. We have access to all of these things. Go on: “For example, we enjoy again.”

**Reader:** “We enjoy Homer again, for example . . . and admiration for what is foreign—  
”<sup>xiv</sup>

**LS:** That is again what he said before: there is dissatisfaction with one’s own, a longing for something else because of the awareness of the defectiveness of one’s own. The simple historicist, so to speak, is not aware that the solution cannot lie in exposing himself to the big unending film which presents him with the whole history of culture throughout all ages and climates. Nevertheless, the problem has made impossible, according to Nietzsche, conservative preservation or refurbishing of the past. I read to you the statement from one of his later writings, “Whispered into the ear of the conservatives” (do you remember that?), when he says you can postpone this “progress,” but you cannot [inaudible] something radically new is required as the alternative to the last man. And what Nietzsche is looking toward is again—in the end, although this is not always visible—is a new kind of synthesis of the Bible and Greece, a radically new one because the older ones have lost their convincing power by virtue of the historical sense. Or as he stated in “Of One Thousand and One Goal,” there must be one goal of mankind, but no goal hitherto available, hitherto known, meets the requirements of this present situation. Now let us read only the last three sentences or so: “Let us confess finally what is most difficult for us men of the historical sense to catch, to feel, to taste, to love.”

**Reader:** “Let us finally own it to ourselves . . . where we are most—in danger.”<sup>xv</sup>

<sup>xii</sup> Presumably Strauss means “in theory.”

<sup>xiii</sup> BGE 224. Kaufmann, 151.

<sup>xiv</sup> BGE 224. Kaufmann, 151-52.

<sup>xv</sup> BGE 224. Kaufmann, 152-53.

**LS:** In other words, what one could also call the “classic” in the strict sense does no longer appeal to us modern people. The measure, the *peras*, the limit, appears to us cold, marble-like. I suppose we all have felt this from time to time when reading some of the greatest modern writers and contrasting them with what was once called the noble simplicity and quiet grandeur of the classics. They’re not so exciting, not so brilliant, and all the other qualities of nineteenth and twentieth century art. Nietzsche uses similar expressions in the third part of *Genealogy of Morals*, “What Is the Significance of Ascetic Ideals?” at the end of paragraph 22. Do you have that? Where he says, at the end, “The ascetic ideal.”

**Reader:** “Obviously the ascetic ideal . . . a lack of restraint—” (Golffing)

**LS:** “Of measure,” the same word which is used here<sup>xvi</sup>.

**Reader:** “dislike for measure. It wants . . . *ne plus ultra*.”<sup>xvii</sup>

**LS:** Well, we may take this up when we come to it, what the possible connection between the ascetic ideal and the historical sense is. Nietzsche believes there is such a connection.

**Student:** In 224, toward the end, he lists the virtues of the historical sense: it is unpretentious, selfless, modest, courageous, and then full of self-overcoming. Now, is that the self-overcoming of the superman?

**LS:** No, it is the self-overcoming of intellectual probity. That is something which is to be integrated in a way which is not made sufficiently clear here, but perhaps we will find greater clarity when we come to the rest of our readings in this quarter. It means a very simple thing: a man of a high culture, as Nietzsche understands him, does not have the slightest interest and sympathy for taking our bearings from the alien. But now we are all too sophisticated, in the good or bad sense of the word, to do that.

Why should we not be interested in and not respect, say, the culture of a simple people on one or the other of the Pacific Islands? Do we not owe it to ourselves, to clarity about ourselves, that we recognize it as a culture, as a form of living as human beings, and so on? Well, I don’t have to tell you this, because that is what you are told every day in every newspaper, let alone in classrooms. Of course one can understand that [inaudible] think, for example, of when the Spaniards came to Mexico, or to Peru. They didn’t have the slightest respect for these people; perhaps some had a certain curiosity for their funny rites, but surely not respect. The respect for diversity is a novel acquisition, which of course is connected, as Nietzsche rightly says, with a sense of the deficiency of one’s own culture. We think we can learn something from others. That is not quite the same as when Greek men like Herodotus traveled to other lands and peoples in order to liberate themselves from peculiarly Greek prejudices. This is something different.

---

<sup>xvi</sup> In *Beyond Good and Evil*.

<sup>xvii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 22. Golffing, 283.

**Student:** In the last sentence of 224, Nietzsche underlines “*our*” and “*in danger*,” as though to indicate that in this point he really is, in the last analysis, in agreement with modern ideas.

**LS:** In a way, yes. Sure. But he is also aware of a loss.

**Student:** Well, I had a slightly different question in mind. If the will to power is in some way the standard—no, let’s get this straight. If there are higher and lower forms of the will to power, greater and lesser degrees of power, and if somehow this might be a standard [inaudible] well, on the one hand you have a classic form which is manifest restraint, which is a kind of power; and in the modern view, you have unmeasured and dangerous. So you’re really going to have two things: you’ll have danger, which is [inaudible] love of danger, which is a form of the will to power, and you’ll have restraint. The question is, just exactly how might one compare, evaluate those two?

**LS:** Could it not be that what Nietzsche is after eventually is some culture (meaning some order of measure) which is much broader, much more comprehensive, than that which was achieved, say, in Greek tragedy? Whether that was or not a *fata morgana*, after which [inaudible], that’s another matter. But the problem of measure here is the same as the problem of truth: Must you not eventually assert a limit? That would be the truth. For example, that this simple proposition that all human thought is based on absolute presuppositions which vary from epoch to epoch, and of which it cannot be said that one is superior to the other, is superior to everything else. So must you not eventually arrive at a limit—or if you call it differently, at an iron bond beyond which it doesn’t make sense to go? Is this notion of an iron bond not the mediation between truth in the ordinary sense of the term on the one hand, and measure, as used here, on the other? So next time [inaudible].

[end of tape]

---

<sup>1</sup> Changed from “indications.”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “apparently.”

## Session 11: no date

**Leo Strauss:** You tried<sup>i</sup> to understand this eighth chapter within the context of the whole work, which is of course necessary. But this has also disadvantages; one must draw a line somewhere. You understand chapter 8 as one of Nietzsche's reflections regarding the possibility of the philosopher of the future. Ultimately that is true, but still he doesn't say very much about philosophy in the eighth chapter (well, there are some polemical remarks about the British). On the other hand, as you observed especially in your conclusion, there is an amazing [prescience]<sup>1</sup> regarding what is coming, or what may come. Now, therefore, let us look at the more massive aspects: What is Nietzsche's *political* hope regarding Europe? You know more or less the situation as it was at that time. There was the international socialist movement, for which Nietzsche had no use, and what was the alternative?

**Student:** The alternative would be Bismarck, which he also seems to be frightened of.

**LS:** Yes, he is surely very critical of it. What is Nietzsche's proposal, then? In what direction does he go? You mentioned it a few times, but I would like for you to put together the various remarks.

**Student:** There seems to be somehow a united Europe of some sort.

**LS:** Yes, very well. That is good as a first approach, and we have seen how important that has become after these two terrible World Wars.

**Student:** It seems that he wants this united Europe, and on the one hand, socialism offers this united Europe; but he seems to reject this, because of the fact that it has the tendencies of a herd morality.

**LS:** Yes, but the socialists were not strictly speaking Europeans, "good Europeans," as Nietzsche says, but internationalists. So Nietzsche limits himself to Europe, and what is the core of that Europe as he sees it?

**Student:** Germany.

**LS:** Yes, and one other country?

**Student:** France.

**LS:** France. And who is left out—I mean, apart from the Portuguese?

**Student:** Russia.

---

<sup>i</sup> Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the start of the session. The reading was not recorded.

**LS:** That doesn't belong to Europe, *à partir de* de Gaulle. But . . .

**Student:** England.

**LS:** —the English. You see how topical that is and how much he seems to have foreseen the situation in the Common Market, and all these other things. That is quite extraordinary, although Nietzsche's reasons were different. One can under no circumstances identify Nietzsche with de Gaulle on this point, because de Gaulle's formula is a "Europe of the fatherlands," meaning that the fatherlands must retain much more of their identity than Nietzsche seems to suggest. So surely this chapter is one of the most brilliant in the book; it is brilliant also in the sense that one can easily read it like high-class journalism which is probably unequalled ever, anywhere. And [it is] also of course very much dated, because he in no way anticipated a situation in which a united Europe from the Vistula to the Atlantic would be inferior as a world power to Russia and the United States.

Now, you took the title seriously: "Nations, Peoples, and Fatherlands," and you discerned more of a critical posture toward the fatherlands than toward the peoples. That the fatherlands are dangerous to creativity is, I think, one of the things which he says. Apart from the references<sup>2</sup>, for example, to what Bismarck has been doing to the Germans, is there any other reference to the fatherland as fatherland in the chapter?

**Student:** I don't remember . . .

**LS:** Well, it is always good (I have not done it in this case) in the case of an author like Nietzsche to have statistics ready—you know, references to peoples on the one hand, fatherlands on the other. I think we can leave it at this point. Is there anyone who would like to bring up a point made by Mr. [student]?

We have to consider two passages in chapter 7, which we did not discuss last time. Let us start from that. These passages are necessary for a proper understanding of the title of the book, that is to say, of the meaning of the book as stated in the title. We take up first number 219, let us read that.

**Reader:** "Moral judgments . . . having been ill-favored by nature—"

**LS:** You see also here, by the way, nature without quotation marks.

**Reader:** "finally an opportunity for acquiring spirit and *becoming* refined—"

**LS:** "Spirit" is here used in the sense of the French *esprit*, not the English "spirit." How can one translate [inaudible]?

**Student:** "Wit" is usually given for "*esprit*."

**LS:** Yes, but “wit” is a bit narrow for that, at least according to present-day usage. All right.

**Reader:** “becoming refined—malice spiritualized.”<sup>ii</sup>

**LS:** No, no: “spiritualizes”; he has translated that [inaudible]. That malice makes people sometimes very clever and subtle is probably known to you from experience. Nietzsche goes a step further with that.

**Student:** Hobbes’s teaching?

**LS:** Yes, in a way.

**Reader:** “It pleases them deep down . . . justice and of that gracious severity—”

**LS:** No, “kind.”

**Reader:** “kind severity which knows . . . and not only among men.”

**LS:** The key point is this, then, which [inaudible] we will read another aphorism to the same effect: that beyond good and evil does not mean anarchism of the drives or urges—that goes without saying. It is rather transmoral and therefore supramoral, but it presupposes the highest moral culture. To the same effect is number 226.

**Reader:** “We immoralists!—This world . . . and in this we are ‘men of duty,’ we, too.”

**LS:** Namely, “we immoralists.”

**Reader:** “Occasionally, that is true . . . dolts and appearances against us.”<sup>iii</sup>

**LS:** Yes. Now we must always keep in mind, if we do not want to misunderstand Nietzsche’s immoralism, that it doesn’t mean the disintegration and abandoning of the highest demands on oneself. On the contrary: according to Nietzsche’s claim, the demands made on oneself on the basis of Nietzsche’s teaching are much higher than those made by earlier morality, because the demands are based on the self commanding itself and taking the full responsibility for the commands, rather than ascribing the responsibility to God, or to nature, or to reason. This surely must be taken into consideration if one does not wish grossly to misunderstand Nietzsche.

Let us turn to our chapter for today, chapter 8. In the broad context to which Mr. [student] referred, we have to raise the question of what does “Peoples and Fatherlands” have to do with this philosophic question of morality, of philosophy. We have seen from the very beginning, from the Preface, that Nietzsche questions the pure mind—of Plato especially,

---

<sup>ii</sup> *BGE* 219. Kaufmann, 147.

<sup>iii</sup> *BGE* 226. Kaufmann, 154-55.

but according to him not only Plato. He is concerned with the whole man, and not with the highest part of man by itself. A consequence of this is his discussion of sex and [of] the specific sexualities which exist, at the end of the preceding chapter especially. This concern with the whole man means also a concern with the typical varieties of men, and one very important type of variety is of course men's national or ethnic differences, because, according to Nietzsche, if it is true that the specific sexuality of man reaches into the highest region of his mind, it stands to reason that the same will be true of ethnic character. It is perfectly necessary then for Nietzsche to devote thought to that.

The chapter begins with Richard Wagner and it ends with Richard Wagner. That shows that Nietzsche is not merely or even chiefly concerned with the political problems of the 1880's, but with what was then called cultural or artistic. A simple explanation is this: the national character of spirituality is more obvious in the case of art than in the case of science. At least science claims to be transnational; whether there are nevertheless national differences regarding science is an accident from the point of view of science. But in the case of art, it seems to be much more than an accident. There is another reason also why he begins and ends with Wagner, and that is very obvious: the problem of Germany. Nietzsche started out as a Wagnerian and then turned away from Wagner. He wrote then (later than this book) an essay, one can say, called *The Case of Wagner*, which contains the most elegant, brilliant, savage criticism probably ever made of any musician by anyone. Now does he speak here of the *Meistersinger*? Yes, let us only read the end of this first number, when he describes [inaudible] he finds something very German, of a noble but by no means perfect character, in this Wagnerian opera. "All in all, no beauty, no south."

**Reader:** "Altogether, no beauty, no south . . . *as yet they have no today.*"<sup>iv</sup>

**LS:** Yes, and this is obviously the relation to the title of the book: the future. If one is concerned with the philosophy of the future and therefore also with the social basis of such a philosophy, one must consider Germany perhaps more than the other great European nations because whether the French have a future in this sense is doubtful, as we shall see later. As far as the English are concerned, there Nietzsche seems to be simply blind. We will come to that passage. But as the next aphorism makes clear, the future belongs not to the Germans, although Germany will be an important ingredient of it. The future belongs to the "good Europeans," an expression which Nietzsche uses here in quotation marks. I do not know who coined that expression, whether Nietzsche coined it himself or whether [inaudible]. I simply do not know. It would be of some interest. Here in this number, he speaks of contemporary Germany and especially of Bismarck, whose name is not mentioned here, however. We can perhaps read this passage. "I become an ear-witness of this conversation."

**Reader:** "As I am digressing . . . conversation between two old 'Patriots'—"

---

<sup>iv</sup> BGE 240. Kaufmann, 173-74.

**LS:** That is in favor of your interpretation. “Patriots” is used in quotation marks because they would not be regarded as patriots in Germany then. Now, go on.

**Reader:** “apparently both were hard of hearing . . . a great thought can give a deed or cause greatness.”<sup>v</sup>

**LS:** And so on. In other words, that is, the name of Bismarck is not mentioned but it is of course [implied]. In the name of the pre-Bismarckian Germany, they are *old-style* patriots, when Germany was regarded as a nation of poets and thinkers. Nietzsche notes here that this victory of Bismarck has brought about or at least belongs together with an intellectual decline of Germany, roughly since 1848. There is an allusion to [this], at the end of this aphorism, “the old men.”

**Reader:** “had obviously become heated . . . deepening of another people.”<sup>vi</sup>

**LS:** What does he have in mind here?

**Student:** Kaufmann suggests the Germans and the French.

**LS:** Yes, that’s correct.

**Student:** Paying the reparations was good for the French; being beaten in the Franco-Prussian war gave them the spanking [inaudible].

**LS:** In a way, yes. They got rid of Napoleon and quite a few things accompanying him. In the next aphorism, he speaks of the emergence of the European. What precisely does it mean? In the first place it is—as he notes, it means the democratic movement of Europe, which is an important part of the Europeanization of the hitherto purely German, French, and so on. Nietzsche explains this (in his way, in order to step on some people’s toes) as a physiological process, meaning different races, different classes, and he simply says this means always different races. And something new emerges which is in one way superior to the ingredients, but in another way inferior: it lacks a certain strength and simplicity which the ingredients have. As he says here, “Hence the slow emergence of an essentially trans-national and nomadic kind of man.” This is near the beginning; do you have it? In other words, he refers to the famous mobility of modern man together with his liberation from traditional ancestral limitations.

He discusses here the emerging European—in the meantime, of course, that has made enormous progress: today almost everyone in Europe has traveled to other European countries, which was a great rarity, say, fifty years ago, and even twenty, thirty years ago. War is of course also a kind of travelling; you must never completely forget that. It was interesting to see that in the Second World War. It was not considered any more (even prior to the speedy victory in 1940) a war against France in the first place, even though

---

<sup>v</sup> BGE 241. Kaufmann, 174-75.

<sup>vi</sup> BGE 241. Kaufmann, 175.



France was the hereditary enemy, traditionally. England was regarded much more as the enemy then. Nietzsche has in a way divined or prepared this state of mind, that France and Germany belong somehow together—the old ingredients of the empire of Charlemagne. Only in 843 [inaudible] a thousand years ago, that they were separated from each other, and even somewhat after of that. And Italy, some of which was also a part of Charlemagne's empire, had barely found its unity in 1870 and was not yet clearly a great power. That always remained a difficulty for Italy, as you may know, for reasons which do not all speak against the Italians. But back to this emergence of the European. Now read “These new conditions”—a little bit later: “under which on the average a leveling and mediocrization of man comes about.”

**Reader:** “The very same new conditions . . . multi-purpose herd animal—”

**LS:** The present-day expression would be “well-adjusted.” No, honestly, that's what is meant.

**Reader:** “are likely in the highest degree . . . dangerous and attractive quality.”<sup>vii</sup>

**LS:** This proves obviously that Nietzsche didn't mean Hitler, because he was very dangerous but no one in his senses would have called him very attractive.

**Student:** That can't be Hitler, in the sense that he'd be attractive to the masses?

**LS:** No, Nietzsche doesn't mean attractive to the masses: he means to him and to people of his taste. That is clear, that in a way what he smelled out proved to be something most terrible from Nietzsche's own point of view. That is undoubtedly true, and to that extent his flair was not good.

**Student:** Could you say a cheerful cynic like Pierre Laval<sup>viii</sup> might be . . . ?

**LS:** No, I don't think so. What Nietzsche was waiting for was a new Napoleon, but none of these people—with the possible exception of the combination Lenin-Stalin, which was surely not what Nietzsche wanted—would live up to his prescription.

**Student:** Doesn't epigram 200 shed light on this, where he describes the same situation and says, “But when the opposition and war in such a nature have the effect of one more charm and incentive of life . . . in other words, self-control, self-outwitting, has been inherited or cultivated, too”; and he lists the kind of men he respects as Alcibiades, Caesar, Hohenstaufen Frederick II,<sup>ix</sup> and Leonardo.

**LS:** Yes, well there are other types, perhaps.

---

<sup>vii</sup> *BGE* 242. Kaufmann, 176.

<sup>viii</sup> Pierre Laval (b. 1883), a French statesman and politician executed for high treason after the Liberation.

<sup>ix</sup> Holy Roman Emperor from 1220 until his death in 1250.

**Student:** Isn't the situation he's describing there the same kind of mixing of breeds?

**LS:** Yes, in a way; that is quite true. That is a state of disintegration, of decay, which for this very reason makes possible, and calls for, a more mighty development of it than [inaudible]. Externally, of course, quantitatively he was naturally much more powerful than Bismarck, who could have been dismissed any day by the Emperor, as you know; that goes without saying. But that is one of the [inaudible] in one sense Nietzsche overestimated the danger of the last man as he is described in the *Zarathustra*. He underestimated the enormous barbarism and persistence of that barbarism in Europe, especially in Germany. That has since been proven, without any question.

**Student:** The reason why I asked if it may be Hitler is at the end of this aphorism, when he talks about how "the democratization of Europe is at the same time—"

**LS:** Well, let us read it, and then we will discuss it. Go on.

**Reader:** "To be sure, that power . . . prepared for *slavery* in the subtlest sense—"

**LS:** In other words, he does not mean an institution of slavery, but simply people who are wholly "other-directed," one could say; they have no core or center of moral legislation in themselves.

**Reader:** "in single, exceptional cases . . . richer than perhaps ever before—"<sup>x</sup>

**LS:** That is important; that is a requirement. Whether the requirement will be fulfilled, Nietzsche doesn't say. Secondly, what is required is a type of strongman who is perhaps stronger and richer than any man ever was before. This would be a help, a solution, to it; but Nietzsche doesn't prophesy that he will come. What happened, in fact, were of course the *führers* in the various nations, especially in Germany. They would be a simple caricature of what Nietzsche meant, and what a caricature. There is no doubt about that, that Nietzsche has nothing to do with them—although he has a great responsibility of having prepared Hitler and Hitlerism by his frequently immoderate language, because Nietzsche made possible for decent people to be able to say things which they could not say prior to him. That is a very great change which has taken place in Germany, and not only in Germany but throughout Europe, under the influence of Nietzsche.

**Student:** This strong man, is this the philosopher?

**LS:** No. Well, it points to him, as it were; he is the infrastructure of the philosopher, I would say.

**Student:** Well, is he saying that this strong man is something positive, something good, which is what he wants?

---

<sup>x</sup> BGE 242. Kaufmann, 176-77.

**LS:** Yes, it is necessary as a counter, in order to resist the mediocrization of man. You must not forget that under the indirect influence of Nietzsche such people like Michels<sup>xi</sup> developed their doctrine of the elite, which would have been absolute[ly] taboo in democratic theories of the nineteenth century. Today, it is the daily bread of political science that you have elites. Well, we don't have to investigate what has become of the elites in this migration from Nietzsche to the daily bread of political science; at any rate, leadership was a requirement in democracy *before* Hitler, of course, and Nietzsche only states this with his usual radicalism and force.

**Student:** In Laval, I quite confused the exception with the general [inaudible] in the light of what he says, especially, of "the stronger and richer": "thanks to the absence of prejudice from his training." Would it be fair to give Col. Lawrence of Arabia as an example of the exceptional, dangerous, and attractive humans?

**LS:** In a way, yes; but I don't think Nietzsche knew him.<sup>xii</sup> His example is Napoleon; if you want to have an older example from an older age which is also sufficiently shocking, then you can name Cesare Borgia.

**Student:** But Lawrence was infinitely superior, in Nietzsche's terms. Napoleon was the bourgeois of all time.

**LS:** I wouldn't say that. I would say [inaudible] Lawrence, in a way, yes; but on the other hand, the extreme moral delicacy of Lawrence of Arabia [inaudible] yes, so I think my example is better. Now, in number 244 he turns again to the Germans, who are still the theme; we cannot read [inaudible] let us read in the second half of this very long aphorism, where he is again very critical of Germany: "The German soul has."

**Reader:** "The German soul has its passageways . . . he feels to be 'profound.'"

**LS:** In quotes, "profound."

**Reader:** "The German himself *is* not . . . and finally set to music by Richard Wagner."

**LS:** Yes; so this gives you an idea of what Nietzsche has to criticize in the German soul. A little bit later he speaks about the German soul again.

**Reader:** "Whoever wants a demonstration of the 'German soul' . . . whatever he experiences he drags."<sup>xiii</sup>

**LS:** That is sufficient. In the next aphorism he speaks again of German music and of Mozart as the peak, compared with whom Beethoven is already dated, and still more,

---

<sup>xi</sup> Robert Michels (b. 1876), German sociologist (a student of Max Weber), part of whose work focused on the importance of elites in different social units.

<sup>xii</sup> Nietzsche would not have known of Lawrence (b. 1888), who distinguished himself for the first time in the Arab Revolt during World War I.

<sup>xiii</sup> *BGE* 244. Kaufmann, 179.

post-Beethovean music. Aphorism 246 is about the German books. Let us read a bit about that, because that has to do with the whole question of writing and also, of course, with Nietzsche's own writing, because Nietzsche was reasonably sure that he had overcome that [problem].

**Reader:** "What torture books written in German . . . that there is *art* in every good sentence—"<sup>xiv</sup>

**LS:** I think those of you who have read some German will see Nietzsche's point. I would be wholly unable, of course, to express it in these marvelous sentences. I have used cruder examples—especially, for example, reading such a great scientist as Max Weber, who was capable of expressing himself very forcefully, but ordinarily he didn't take the trouble. I compared this case of Max Weber (and he is not the only one) to a very honest, hard-working artisan who comes out of his shop after he has done his work, sweating and in his shirtsleeves, and in this way he presents himself to the public in his books. Or another example, one could say, is that the sentence as understood by people like Weber is comparable to a sausage: if you can put a bit more meat in it still, until it bursts at the seams [inaudible] this is doubtless; Nietzsche has here something in mind which truly exists, there is no doubt about it. Precisely among scholars and the most respectable scholars that is doubtless true. In the next number, 247, he contrasts how the Germans read and write with how the ancients read. This is of a more general interest than the content of this chapter as a whole.

**Reader:** "How little German style . . . ears are put away in a drawer."

**LS:** I suppose this is true not only of the Germans but of most modern men. I do not know [inaudible]. The Italian scholars have the same vice, I believe, as the German scholars, as far as I can judge from my very limited experience there. Formerly, French and English were more careful, also as scholars, in their writing, but I am doubtful whether this has survived certain things which have happened in the meantime.

**Reader:** "In antiquity men read . . . modern and in every sense short of breath."<sup>xv</sup>

**LS:** Of course, this was somewhat different in the Anglo-Saxon worlds, if my information is correct, in the times of Addison.<sup>xvi</sup> The abolition of the period and the short sentence has ruled. The Germans still continued writing in large sentences, but with the qualification to which I referred. Nietzsche goes on here to say, at the end: "The masterpiece of German prose."

**Reader:** "is fairly enough, the masterpiece of its greatest preacher . . . the best German book."

---

<sup>xiv</sup> BGE 246. Kaufmann, 182.

<sup>xv</sup> BGE 247. Kaufmann, 183.

<sup>xvi</sup> Joseph Addison (b. 1672), English politician and writer.

**LS:** Since in Germany there was really no political oratory, the only oratory was that of the preachers; that is the connecting thought.

**Reader:** “Compared with Luther’s Bible . . . German hearts—as the Bible did.”<sup>xvii</sup>

**LS:** Yes, and then he speaks in the next number (there is a very obvious connection between this and the next number) of the two kinds of geniuses among peoples: feminine, we could say, and masculine. As the feminine, he mentions the Greeks and the French; and as masculine, the Jews, the Romans, and perhaps the Germans. Let us read this intermezzo in number 249.

**Reader:** “Every people has its own Tartuffery and calls it its virtues.—What is best in his we do not know—we cannot know.”<sup>xviii</sup>

**LS:** You see here the dash which he puts between the two sentences. This occasional remark about the “*Tartüfferie*” of all peoples is a peg, as it were, on which Nietzsche hangs a much more important thought—namely, the ultimate impossibility of self-knowledge. We have spoken of that at the end of last time.

**Student:** Is this connected with that section, I believe, in the last chapter, where he spoke of something which is unteachable?

**LS:** Yes, it is connected, but it is not identical, because the unteachable in us—our “fundamental stupidity,” as Nietzsche also calls it—could well be known to us. Whether it can be fully known is another matter. The power which this id has, this individual id, is connected with the fact that we do not and cannot know it; and therefore the old ideal of self-knowledge cannot be realized except within very narrow limits.

**Student:** What it seems to be connected with is that unteachable things seem to be very low, and now he speaks of something, which is the best in us and which we cannot know.

**LS:** Yes, but this very low is the highest; that is the self. He doesn’t mean by it what Freud means by the id, because in Freud it doesn’t have this individual character, it is not the root of a man’s creativity. The point which is beyond the question of the individual is of course of crucial importance: no historical epoch and no great thinker belonging to any epoch can as such fully understand himself. Its absolute presuppositions, to use this expression which I have so frequently used, cannot be known as such to the period in question; they are so evident that no question arises. Only after a fundamental change in orientation do these evident presuppositions appear to be questionable. This leads to very great difficulties because it is then this insight into this fact that men always rely eventually or primarily on such absolute presuppositions which change from epoch to epoch, the change being not a rational change or progress—is this insight itself, which is the

---

<sup>xvii</sup> BGE 247. Kaufmann, 184.

<sup>xviii</sup> BGE 249. Kaufmann, 185.

ultimate at which we arrive, not final and evident? Therefore, we are to that extent back to the old notion of philosophy.

**Student:** [Inaudible] is there any connection between that problem and the emphasis on the sense of hearing in this chapter?

**LS:** No, I don't think so.

**Student:** Given that, could you explain the emphasis on hearing in this chapter?

**LS:** Well, in the preceding number, 247 [inaudible].

**Student:** I mean throughout chapter 8.

**LS:** Because of music? Do you mean that? You would also take the aphorisms on music together [inaudible]. Well, I am not aware of it; you may be right. I understand that you are a musical young man, and you will doubtless see many things which I, being wholly unmusical, wouldn't see. Try.

**Student:** Possible answer: that identification of sight with more certain knowledge, as in the *Metaphysics*, and [inaudible].

**LS:** Well, this has often been said, that for the Greeks the sense of sight is the highest sense, and that it is connected with Greek rationalism, or intellectualism, as you call it. In the Bible the highest sense is hearing, as in hearing the voice of the Lord. The Lord cannot be seen and you cannot make any visible likenesses of Him and so on. But I don't believe that Nietzsche ever speaks about this anywhere, at least as far as my knowledge about it goes.

**Student:** How does Nietzsche's view differ from Socrates' saying that he knows that he does not know?

**LS:** Because then Socrates, as you know, implies that he knows what is most important. For example, Socrates doesn't say that he doesn't know who his father and mother were, or that he was an Athenian, and so on. So he is ignorant regarding the most important things, but he could not say that without having identified the most important things; he says he doesn't have knowledge, i.e., fully evident knowledge of them. This knowledge is understood by him as essentially unchangeable, *if* one has it. Nietzsche questions this unchangeability, even as an ideal. Does that not make sense?

**Student:** Well, if what Nietzsche says is the case, then he in a certain sense has a knowledge of what is most important.

**LS:** In the sense in which Socrates says what is the most important [inaudible] sure, let us say one part, and in a way the most important part, of the question of man's highest possibility. To that extent Nietzsche and Socrates mean the same thing. But for Socrates

there is no historical change of the soul; for Nietzsche there is, as we have seen more than once. Is this not sufficient to indicate (although not to make fully clear) the fundamental difference between Nietzsche and Socrates?

**Student:** But on the other hand, they're both, one might think, striving for the same [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, but then it becomes so general and so abstract that it is, exactly from Nietzsche's point of view, not very helpful because it abstracts from history. Well, that is an infinite question, Nietzsche and Socrates. We have seen in this work only very negative remarks, and we find more later on. There are other utterances of his, in his so-called middle period, which are much more favorable to Socrates. But fundamentally understood, Socrates is *the* antagonist. Of course that means they have something in common; otherwise there would be no antagonism. There must be something in common if there is to be antagonism.

**Student:** But insofar as Nietzsche believes his own position to be particularly unique, insofar as he is the first philosopher with the historical sense, his uniqueness is perhaps akin to the Socratic uniqueness.

**LS:** But in the opposite direction. So where were we now? We have read 249. Now, in 250 and 251, he speaks about the Jews and first, in 250, of what Europe owes to the Jews. It is sufficient to read the beginning. No, it is not long; we can read it.

**Reader:** "What Europe owes to the Jews? Many things, good and bad, and above all one thing that is both of the best and of the worst: the grand style in morality, the terribleness and majesty of infinite demands, infinite meanings, the whole romanticism and sublimity of moral questionabilities—and hence precisely the most attractive, captious, and choicest part of those plays of color and seductions to life in whose afterglow the sky of our European culture, its evening sky, is burning now—perhaps burning itself out. We artists among the spectators and philosophers are—grateful for this to the Jews."<sup>xix</sup>

**LS:** Now, is this in need of any special comment, or one comment in particular?

**Student:** Could you discuss a little why it's both of the best and the worst?

**LS:** Because the Jews are, from Nietzsche's point of view, *the* originators of good and evil, in contradistinction to good and bad.

**Student:** I can see why that for Nietzsche would be bad, but what about the goodness?

**LS:** Because it has given the human soul a breadth and a depth which it did not have. Occasionally he speaks of the Greeks and their superficialities in contrast to the Bible. This thought is so well known and evident, in a way, at first glance to every one of us,

---

<sup>xix</sup> *BGE* 250. Kaufmann, 185.

regardless of what our upbringing is. Think, for example, of such a Socratic statement as “sin is ignorance,” where it cannot be the case that someone knows what is good and yet does the opposite. That is at first glance one of these Greek superficialities. We all know the moral conflict of someone *knowing* he shouldn’t do it, and yet being overcome. This is the most obvious example (and there are other things which are connected to it): there’s no comparison between the whole Greek notion, especially of Socrates, that sin is ignorance, and the depth of the awareness of sin in both Judaism and Christianity. This is of course not a solution to the problem, but I only wanted to appeal to something with which you are doubtless familiar.

At any rate, Nietzsche speaks very highly of the Jews, as you see at the same time, extremely briefly. Now he comes to a more practical question; namely, the Jews in Germany, and especially that movement which came to be called anti-Semitism, which under this name has become world-famous. The term was coined by a German journalist called Marr,<sup>xx</sup> as I read somewhere; it is of course an idiotic expression. <sup>3</sup>Someone told me about someone else that he was an anti-Semite, and I asked: Why, does he hate the Arabs? It is of course only a circumlocution for being anti-Jewish. But it was these people who started this movement [inaudible] anti-Jewish could mean being opposed to Judaism on Christian grounds; that is an old story of two thousand years. But they wanted not to be so old-fashioned that they would be thought to regard the Jews as unbelievers in the divinity of Christ, and so on—and they wanted to be scientific, so they had to put it on the basis which was supplied by the word anti-Semitic, and which of course doesn’t make any sense. Therefore, if one is a bit careful regarding the terms which one uses, one should avoid it. Now then he speaks here about the anti-Jewish movement in Germany and he makes the following extraordinary statement (we don’t have to read the beginning): “I have not yet met a German.”

**Reader:** “a German who was well-disposed toward the Jews.”<sup>xxi</sup>

**LS:** Yes, that is an extraordinary statement. I suppose there would be quite a few people who would refute Nietzsche, learned people like the people who refuted Goethe when he said somewhere in a note, “I have loved many women” and he said somewhere, “I loved this one more than any other.” And then a commentator is said to have said: “Here Goethe is mistaken; he loved Y more than X.” But I think what Nietzsche has in mind is correct; I know some Germans who were favorably disposed towards the Jews; but being favorably disposed towards the Jews, of course, does not mean that one *likes* the Jews as Jews. I know some Germans who do that, not many. But Nietzsche apparently had not met anyone, and that is of some interest. Then he gives a certain justification of that anti-Jewish movement, saying “There are enough Jews in Germany.”

**Reader:** “That Germany has amply *enough* Jews, that the German stomach, the German blood has trouble (and will still have trouble for a long time) digesting even this quantum of “Jew”—as the Italians, French, and English have done, having a stronger digestive

---

<sup>xx</sup> Wilhelm Marr (b. 1819), German pamphleteer and agitator.

<sup>xxi</sup> *BGE* 251. Kaufmann, 187.



system—that is the clear testimony and language of a general instinct to which one must listen, in accordance with which one must act.”<sup>xxii</sup>

**LS:** What is the obvious mistake of this argument? Well, the percentage of Jews in Germany was considerably higher than in these other countries, and therefore Nietzsche may be right nevertheless. But the argument is defective.

**Student:** In his general attitude towards Jews, when he analyzes the problem of Anti-Semitism in terms of the Jews ever being accepted in Germany, do they have to be accepted as Germans?

**LS:** That is hard to say [inaudible].

**Student:** Or do they have to give up being Jews in order to be accepted?

**LS:** Well, that was the old line. In the old interior of Germany up to 1918, the official line was this: the baptized Jew is no longer a Jew.

**Student:** Except Mendelssohn always was, to his friends, the Jew.

**LS:** But Mendelssohn was never baptized.

**Student:** No, I was thinking about the composer, Felix, not the grandfather.<sup>xxiii</sup>

**LS:** Still, that was not the official [inaudible] I mean, to that extent, this notion of the Christian state, which was surely the basis of the German state up to 1848—in fact, as distinguished from its laws, it was considered a Christian state much later beyond that, whereas the so-called anti-Semites were *racial* anti-Semites, although the term was not so frequently used as it came to be used toward 1933 and of course after that. Now here is another point, what he says about the Jewish problem, toward the end of this paragraph, “That the Jews if they wanted, or if they were compelled.”

**Reader:** “or if they were forced into it . . . planning for that is equally certain.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

**LS:** Well, he grossly overestimated the power of the Jews, even in the 1880’s, in spite of the power of some famous Jewish banking-houses and so on. It is one of these [inaudible] where Nietzsche was too sanguine, one could say. That’s not the only case of that. And now he goes on, and what he says is of course something very true.

**Reader:** “Meanwhile they want and wish rather, even with some importunity, to be absorbed and assimilated by Europe; they long to be fixed, permitted, respected somewhere at long last, putting an end to the nomads’ life, to the “Wandering Jew”; and

---

<sup>xxii</sup> BGE 251. Kaufmann, 187.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Moses Mendelssohn (b. 1729), an influential German Jewish philosopher and theologian. He was the grandfather of the composer Felix Mendelssohn (b. 1809).

<sup>xxiv</sup> BGE 251. Kaufmann, 188.

this bent and impulse (which may even express an attenuation of the Jewish instincts) should be noted well and *accommodated*: to that end it might be useful and fair to expel the anti-Semitic screamers from the country.”<sup>xxv</sup>

**LS:** Now this point, that there was such a weakening of what Nietzsche calls the “Jewish instincts,” especially among the German Jews, is undoubtedly true. But it is also true that the bulk of the German Jews resisted this desire which even the liberal Germans at that time had, thinking that the Jewish problem would immediately disappear when there would be no longer any grossly visible difference between a German of Jewish origin and a German of Teutonic origin. There was a certain sense of pride on the Jewish side, which of course would have opposed this even in the case of a man so free from viciousness as Nietzsche.

In 252, we see now (and it is very interesting) that while Nietzsche is very favorably disposed towards the Jews, as far as he could be, he does not like the British. Let us read only the beginning.

**Reader:** “They are no philosophical race . . . for more than a century.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

**LS:** Now Nietzsche is not the only one who has said this, but Nietzsche probably spoke more emphatically (I mean among the Germans) about the English. Regarding Bacon, Nietzsche speaks very differently in one of his latest writings, *Ecce Homo*, and he regards it as perfectly possible, although not for the usual reasons, that Bacon and Shakespeare might be the same person. That was probably only a playing with [inaudible] you have no idea what a genius could do; that the same individual could be Bacon and Shakespeare is not such a preposterous notion. I don’t think he meant more by that; but it is particularly striking, because after all Nietzsche’s key word (as you know) is power, will to power. And who were the people who brought this subject up in the first place?

**Student:** Bacon and his little secretary Hobbes.

**LS:** Yes, sure. So here Nietzsche is simply not sufficiently competent. But there is a reason for Nietzsche’s gross injustice, and this becomes clear towards the end of the next paragraph.

**Reader:** “Finally, we should not forget that the English with their profound normality—”

**LS:** “Normality” means here, well, more literally translated, averageness.

**Student:** “Ordinariness.”

**LS:** Yes.

---

<sup>xxv</sup> BGE 251. Kaufmann, 188.

<sup>xxvi</sup> BGE 252. Kaufmann, 189.

**Reader:** “have once before caused . . . of modern ideas, that of *England*.—”<sup>xxvii</sup>

**LS:** Well, I’m sure that de Gaulle has chewed on that more than once. But what does Nietzsche have in mind? After all, was the French Revolution not the work, as far as it had an intellectual prehistory, of the French *philosophes* and not of the English?

**Student:** But wasn’t there a large influence of England on France; especially, I know, on Voltaire?

**LS:** Yes, Voltaire. Who is the great authority for him? Locke, sure.

**Student:** And Newton, too.

**LS:** Yes, sure. But Nietzsche doesn’t think here of Newton, I believe; [he is thinking] especially, of course, [of] this great science, with which Nietzsche had nothing to do and which contributed so much to giving modern life and modern man his distinct character: namely, political economy, which is doubtless more of British than of French origin. Then he turns again, naturally, to France and he makes some observations which are of the utmost topicality about its inability to resist intellectual and spiritual Germanization. I think this Germanization has made enormous progress, especially after the Second World War. I have not heard any interesting French thought in the last twenty or thirty years that didn’t come from the other bank of the Rhine. Sartre’s work, or whoever’s one can think of, is of German origin. Of course, it is Frenchified in a way, but the origin is doubtless German. Let us only read the end of this aphorism, in order to see the way also in which Nietzsche [inaudible] when he speaks of the great superiority which the French have, that they are both a northern and a southern nation, contrary to the Germans and English (who are northern), and contrary, of course, to the Spanish and Italians (who are simply southern). “The born Middlelanders.” Do you have that?

**Reader:** “They are the born Middlelanders . . . a piece of *the south of music*.—”<sup>xxviii</sup>

**LS:** This is the transition to the next aphorism [255], where he speaks of a music which is trans-German and even trans-European. That is somehow connected with Bizet and with the *Carmen*, which I’m sure many of you know. He explains [inaudible] let us read this: “If such a Southlander.”

**Reader:** “If such a southerner . . . profound enough to receive such late fugitives.—”<sup>xxix</sup>

**LS:** You remember what he said in the first aphorism on the Jews, when the question was raised of what is good and bad about the contribution of the Jews<sup>4</sup>. Well, here he states it again: he looks forward toward a music—and that means of course much more than merely music—which does not know anything any more about good and evil, and yet

---

<sup>xxvii</sup> BGE 253. Kaufmann, 191.

<sup>xxviii</sup> BGE 254. Kaufmann, 195.

<sup>xxix</sup> BGE 255. Kaufmann, 195.

which remembers the good/evil distinction without any resentment or hostility. That is very beautifully expressed, I think. Now, in the next and last aphorism [256] he speaks again of Europe. Let us read only the beginning.

**Reader:** “Owing to the pathological . . . can of necessity only be *entr’acte* policies—”<sup>xxx</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. In other words, Nietzsche had seen what probably very few people had seen at that time: how doomed to failure these policies were which were then preponderant, even among the greatest statesmen. Think of Bismarck, who was probably the greatest statesman, the most intelligent statesman of that age. When Bismarck died in 1898, the London *Times* said that—and the London *Times* was at that time regarded as the peak of political wisdom in its [inaudible] as uncertain as all human things are, one can say with a certain assurance that the work of Bismarck will last. That was in 1898: twenty years later, his work was destroyed. So little do people know, and in a way *can* people know. It requires the solitude and the alienation of a man like Nietzsche to get some inklings of what was to come, and he was by no means always right, as we have seen. He had at least the necessary horizon for making reasonable guesses.

We have to leave it at that. It ends again with a criticism of the reactionary character of the Germany of his time, and its pseudo-Christianity, represented by the work of Richard Wagner. That’s the end of it; he ends as he had begun.

[end of session]

---

<sup>1</sup> Deleted “perceptivity.”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “to.”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “then.”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “according to Nietzsche.”

## Session 12: no date

**Leo Strauss:** Your paper<sup>i</sup> was thoughtful but it was a bit too long, which means you did not comply with the imposed tyrannical necessity to concentrate it. Therefore, as a consequence in your particular case you devoted your paper chiefly to the first aphorisms, say up to 267 or 268. You were guided by the question—which is necessary, and by which one must be guided in this book—of what has this question of nobility to do with philosophy. But you lost yourself somewhere on the way. Some of your formulations showed that you had the key to the answer to this question, but you did not elaborate it. One thing I must take objection to: of number 292, you say that it is the traditional definition of the philosopher. Well, I think it is wholly untraditional: show me any page or place anywhere in Plato and Aristotle, to say nothing of others who have spoken of such things, where it says that. But it shows also the connection [to what they say]. “A philosopher, that is a human being who constantly experiences, sees, hears, suspects, hopes, dreams of extraordinary things,” meaning [that] he is the least common of all men. It is in no way traditional, especially the last aphorism, and the second before the last one (of which you had no time to speak, because of this shall we say lack of organization, lack of prudence). Is this all right? But it was a good paper; there is no doubt about it.

Now we have to do the best we can with the relatively short time at our disposal. (You see I can be very nasty.) Let us first start with the title. The whole book is called *Beyond Good and Evil*. This means, as we know by now, that it is not beyond good and bad, but Nietzsche proposes another notion of good. This is developed explicitly in the first part of the *Genealogy of Morals*, as we will hear next time. Provisionally, we may say this, that the distinction between good and evil implies indignation toward what is evil, whereas the distinction between good and bad implies contempt for what is bad. You cannot condemn, strictly speaking, where you are indignant. This is linked with the master/slave morality. The good/evil distinction belongs to the slaves; the good/bad distinction belongs to the masters, according to Nietzsche. The good/bad morality is primarily and consciously the morality of a ruling caste. This already is clear from our chapter, let alone from the *Genealogy of Morals*. Nietzsche deals with that in our chapter, in number 260, which is a long paragraph. He says the fundamental distinction is between master morality and slave morality, and when he speaks of the master, he says he [the master] despises the slaves. “Slave” does not necessarily indicate a legal category, of course; it simply means the ruled. He despises them. Slave morality, on the other hand, is said to be essentially a utility morality.

Now you raised one point quite rightly by going back to the German. *Vornehm* is not identical with noble. The German language makes a distinction between *edel* and *vornehm*, which are both translated into English as noble. The distinction was made at least once before Nietzsche (and maybe more times) by Goethe, in his *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Book 5, chapter 16, which those of you who know German might read. The

---

<sup>i</sup> Strauss responds to a student’s paper, read at the start of the session. The reading was not recorded.

passage in question is about six pages from the end of Book 5. I think there is also an English translation where you could look it up; I would be unable to translate it, probably. At any rate, *edel* no longer has a necessary connection with origin [or] with caste, whereas *vornehm* still has this. So a man may be *edel* without being *vornehm*—but according to what Goethe says, one cannot be *vornehm* without being *edel*. This must be kept in mind. Nietzsche is here concerned with an aristocratic morality, not merely [inaudible] the morality of nobility could very well mean a morality of moral elevation, which has nothing to do with any social distinctions. That is not the view of Nietzsche.

He begins with the thesis that every rising of the type “man” was hitherto the work of an aristocratic society, and it will always be in this way. This states only in another way what we have read in number 188 (which you may remember), where he also opposes the democratic view (or “prejudice,” as he would call it) when he says that “every morality is, in opposition to the *laissez aller*, a kind of tyranny against ‘nature,’ even against ‘reason.’”<sup>ii</sup> Such a tyranny of laws which are not reasonable (or not *evidently* reasonable), a tyranny of long duration, is the indispensable condition for elevation of the type of man; that’s fundamentally the same thought.

Let us see. We must never forget the problem of nature here, to which you referred. In number 257, when he speaks of these early aristocratic societies, he says “man with a still natural nature” without any quotation marks. Can you have an unnatural nature? What does Nietzsche mean by that? Well, “natural” is here used in the old sense, where it is normative: a healthy nature; and the other natures would then be “against nature,” morbid—or, as Nietzsche puts it in the next number, a “corruption.” Therefore Nietzsche turns to the subject of corruption, and states the complexity of this. Let us read from the middle of number 258: “The essential.”

**Reader:** “The essential characteristic . . . to incomplete human beings, to slaves, to instruments.”<sup>iii</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. In other words, an aristocracy does not regard itself as the servant of the commonwealth, but as its purpose. The commonwealth apart from the ruling class (meaning the ruled) are for their sake. This is indeed very close to what Plato and Aristotle mean, but you see also here [that] they must be made slaves. The question of whether they deserve to be made slaves, whether they are by nature slaves, is not raised by Nietzsche. That doesn’t make any difference to him because the main point is that originally such a society emerges as a condition of the development of a higher kind of man. That is in no way surprising, but it was absolutely necessary to say it, against Marx especially. There is no society, at least no worthwhile society, without exploitation—Nietzsche uses this term here. That cannot be changed. And of course the experience we have had since with Marxism is not simply a refutation of what Nietzsche says, because there are surely rulers and ruled, and also therefore exploiters and exploited. That the exploited are called “criminals” doesn’t alter the situation, because in the old aristocratic

---

<sup>ii</sup> Strauss’s translation.

<sup>iii</sup> *BGE* 258. Kaufmann, 202.

society the slaves were also regarded as inferior and deserving to be treated in the way in which they were.

Then comes this very important aphorism, number 260. (We have to proceed at a somewhat faster pace today, for the reason which I have emphasized before; but there is a justification for this, because next time we will have to take up the question of good and bad, good and evil, that will be our sole theme then.) Nietzsche, then, in number 261, after he has shown the two kinds of moralities, the aristocratic and the slave morality, gives one example to make it clearer; and that is vanity. Nietzsche asserts that vanity is incompatible with *Vornehmheit* because all vanity presupposes inner dependence on the opinion of others, whereas what is characteristic of the masters is exactly that they do not have such an inner dependence. They have of course some dependence on the opinions of their fellow rulers. In the meantime they have made the distinction between “tradition-directed” and “other-directed” cultures.<sup>iv</sup> That has something to do with what Nietzsche has in mind, because aristocratic morality would of course be tradition-directed and hence by definition not other-directed. The other-directedness is a sign that you are not tradition directed. This distinction between self-directed, tradition-directed, and other-directed goes back, I’m sure, in one way or another, to Nietzsche himself, although I could not at this moment trace it. It has somehow a Nietzschean stamp.

Now, this alternative to the aristocratic morality, vanity, leads him to discuss another opposite of the morality of masters in number 262: namely, the morality of mediocrity, into which aristocratic morality degenerates under certain conditions. He has in mind (rather obviously, I think) Socrates. This has to do with the fact that in certain cases, when the original situation to which the aristocratic society owed its being has been disposed of<sup>v</sup> by victory and conquest and so on, while the commonwealth has become secure, then the old bonds lose their power. As in, say, Athens after the Persian war [inaudible]. Then the individual emerges: Alcibiades would of course be the greatest example. You remember what Nietzsche said in “Thousand and One Goal” about the individual coming later than the groups, than the peoples. I think you took this a bit too inflexibly. That a society emerges out of all kinds of conditions—say, climatic, and of course also what neighbors it has—somehow goes without saying for Nietzsche. You remember in “Thousand and One Goal”—but the question is, then, how one group [inaudible] say, originally they are all equal. Then, by virtue of some victories or maybe a single victory, one of these groups emerges as the ruling one and the others become enslaved. This leads to a radical change in the posture of these originally equal groups. That is a very abstract construction which I am now putting to you, but something of this kind is presupposed by Nietzsche. Of course there was an original [inaudible] there is no question. You tried to say that ultimately it is fear in both cases, in the case of the masters and the slaves. Did you not try to say [inaudible]?

**Student:** No, I tried not to.

---

<sup>iv</sup> Along with “inner-directed,” these are three distinct cultural types identified in David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denny’s influential sociological study, *The Lonely Crowd* (1950).

<sup>v</sup> Strauss seems to mean something like “weakened.”

**LS:** I see; but you moved for a moment in that direction.

**Student:** Yes; but I stopped at the brink.

**LS:** I see. In other words, to be exposed to dangers is essential to man and to society in all times, in all places. The question is what their posture toward dangers is. Is it one of craven fear, or is it rather one of provocation, so to speak? This is not yet settled by the general fact that there is always danger. Nietzsche takes up the subject here of which he had spoken especially in chapter 5. The morality of utility is of course not itself slave morality, as he had made clear there, but it has a certain kinship to it, which we have to figure out for ourselves if we want to understand it. Nietzsche's point is that this kind of slave morality coming up in modern Europe, the theory of which is utilitarianism, leads in fact to a new kind of slavery and to a slavish posture. Let us read the beginning of number 263.

**Reader:** "There is an *instinct for rank* which, more than anything else, is a sign of *high rank*—"<sup>vi</sup>

**LS:** "Is already the sign."

**Reader:** "there is a delight in the nuances . . . against obtrusive efforts and ineptitudes."

**LS:** That is a very special case, because in the old primary aristocratic society, these things of first rank would be protected by the "shudders of authority." Nietzsche has in mind, I believe, such phenomena like himself and his own experience, how people reacted to him, and without any sense of his superiority. But his case is not the only one, I am sure of that. At any rate, of crucial importance for this aristocratic morality are reverence and deference. Read the beginning of number 264.

**Reader:** "One cannot erase . . . liked most to do and did most constantly."<sup>vii</sup>

**LS:** And so on. Then a little bit later he says, "This is the problem of race." That has nothing to do with colors of the skin or such things; what is of crucial importance is the origins, the ancestors, the race. That is the same here. In other words, Nietzsche speaks in *his* way of what the ancients understood by "nature," but this is not the old way. Let us read the next number.

**Reader:** "At the risk of displeasing . . . egoism belongs to the nature of a noble soul—"

**LS:** Of course this must be rightly understood. Nietzsche does not mean that a man who is an egoist proves by this fact that he has a noble soul. That goes without saying. Therefore he makes himself clear immediately afterwards.

---

<sup>vi</sup> *BGE* 263. Kaufmann, 212.

<sup>vii</sup> *BGE* 264. Kaufmann, 213.



**Reader:** “I mean that unshakable faith . . . and have to sacrifice themselves.”<sup>viii</sup>

**LS:** Here he speaks again of nature, but the question is here the belief [inaudible] this fact that there are other inferior beings is the *belief* of the noble soul. It is not necessarily true, of course; it is maybe only an expression of it. The noble soul reveres itself and its equals—that’s to say, nothing higher. We are already much beyond these early aristocratic societies, which of course always revered gods. Nietzsche has dropped this on his way. Let me see. Somewhat later, at the end of number 287, he says, “*The noble soul has reverence for itself.*” This is also a Goethean formula, but in Goethe there is also reverence for what is above us, in the same context; that is dropped here.

[Why]<sup>1</sup> he goes over to commonness in number 268 is clear, because commonness is the opposite of *Vornehmheit*. One must beware here of a danger, because there is such a thing as snobbishness, which has been defined as the contempt for common things on no other ground but that they are common. For example, air is very common, but to despise it is absurd because every action based on such contempt would prove to be preposterous. In other words, “commonness” has doubtless not this snobbish meaning in Nietzsche. Let us turn to the end of this number, where he tries to explain why commonness is so indispensable for the preservation of the human race: “The evaluation of a man betrays something of the structure of his soul, and where it sees its.”

**Reader:** “its conditions of life, its true need . . . average, herdlike—*common!*”<sup>ix</sup>

**LS:** Yes. So in other words, nature seems to favor mediocrity, or the low. Is this the reason, or one of the reasons, why Nietzsche uses “nature,” in 188, for example, with quotation marks? Is it not in a way an anti-natural power or counter-power to which he appeals, by virtue of which a higher human race is possible? You must always consider, I think, number 188 as a very important section for understanding Nietzsche’s whole position.

In number 269, he turns to a question [or problem] which becomes necessary given everything preceding it: namely, that the simple opposition between the high and the low will not do. There will be a low *in* the high man. The alternative would obviously be for Nietzsche an unbearable [? idealism]<sup>x</sup>. The low *is* in the high, although it will be transfigured and transformed by being an ingredient of the high. People don’t see this, of course. When they admire, they admire without any qualification and don’t see the defects in their idol. Where the many revere, the knower of souls sees the misery and feels pity. Yet Nietzsche saw, especially in the case of Richard Wagner, the utter inadequacy of pity and even of human love in general. He finds in this fact the key to Jesus, at the end [of the aphorism], and to the psychology of Jesus, if it is permitted to use these expressions. We cannot [inaudible] we must go on. Let us turn to number 270,

---

<sup>viii</sup> BGE 265. Kaufmann, 215.

<sup>ix</sup> BGE 268. Kaufmann, 217.

<sup>x</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

because here [inaudible] the psychology of Jesus is in a way the crucial transition (you have sensed this to some extent, I know that, and I give you credit for it) to another concept of the *vornehm*. Let us read 270.

**Reader:** “The spiritual haughtiness . . . . Profound suffering makes noble; it separates.”<sup>xi</sup>

**LS:** *Vornehm* is the word. In other words, there was no emphasis on profound suffering in the discussion of aristocracy. Of course not, that was not in the foreground there. Now we will deal with an entirely different notion of nobility, of *Vornehmheit*, which is as much a part of the full phenomenon that Nietzsche has in mind as the first. I think the transition is indicated by what he said on Jesus toward the end of 269. This thought has been popularized almost *ad nauseam* by Thomas Mann. If some of you know him, you will be aware of that. For Nietzsche, it is only one ingredient. Then he turns to something seemingly unrelated, to this new and radically different ingredient of *Vornehmheit*: namely, deep suffering. It is the nobility of cleanliness, as he puts it in 271. Well, it is short enough; we can read it.

**Reader:** “What separates two people . . . remains: ‘They can’t stand each other’s smell!’”<sup>xii</sup>

**LS:** Which is a very common German idiomatic expression. There is no possible argument against it, just as little as there is for “X is not my cup of tea.”

**Reader:** “The highest instinct . . . the highest spiritualization of this instinct.”

**LS:** Namely, of which instinct, to make it quite clear?

**Student:** For cleanliness.

**LS:** Yes.

**Reader:** “Whether one is privy . . . even pity itself as a pollution, as dirty—”<sup>xiii</sup>

**LS:** Yes. This is fundamentally the same phenomenon of which he had begun to speak explicitly in number 270. You can easily see that, not only from the explicit reference to the saints (and the original, barbaric ruling races were not saints, of course), but you see it from the very [inaudible] what is the phenomenon which he is discussing here? Quite superficially, the word used by him?

**Student:** Cleanliness?

---

<sup>xi</sup> BGE 270. Kaufmann, 220.

<sup>xii</sup> BGE 271. Kaufmann, 221.

<sup>xiii</sup> BGE 271. Kaufmann, 221.

**LS:** “Cleanliness.” We must have the courage to say [inaudible]. But there is another, higher word, which Nietzsche deliberately avoids, and which is a key to this part.

**Student:** Purity.

**LS:** Yes. It is interesting that Nietzsche reduces it to its lowest denominator, where it is just mere cleanliness. You will see something similar also in the *Genealogy of Morals*, where he speaks explicitly of it. Now a further point regarding nobility, in 276.

**Reader:** “In all kinds of injury . . . the dangers for the latter must be greater—”<sup>xiv</sup>

**LS:** Let us leave it here only at this. Coarseness is a consideration that was not quite clear from the beginning; after all, the barbaric rulers, the ruling class in a barbaric society, are likely to be very coarse themselves. So this is another crucial ingredient, connected perhaps with that cleanliness and its implications: namely, that the coarse is as such incompatible with the noble. One can say that the noble, the *vornehm*, means the high. That is clear first of all in the social sense: those at the top, but then also the spiritual. I wouldn’t say the intellectual, because [inaudible] for a variety of reasons. First of all, there is the present-day usage, where intellectuality has absolutely nothing to do with what is noble or *vornehm*; secondly, it has not even much to do with intelligence. The latter is a kind of bureaucratic concept: “people who live from reading and writing,” I suggest as a simple definition of intellectuals. That is maybe good for taxes and other statistical purposes, but it is not helping us any. But the spiritual does belong to the noble as Nietzsche understood it. Read number 288, when he speaks of that (only the beginning): “There are men who have spirit”—*esprit*—“in an inevitable way; they may do what they like, and even if they put their hands in front of their—”

**Reader:** “they may turn and twist as they please . . . something they conceal, namely spirit.”<sup>xv</sup>

**LS:** We can leave it at this. This, you will see, is the theme which underlies these sections here, and which of course makes possible the transition to the philosopher, of whom he begins to speak in 289, if I am not mistaken. There are all kinds of solitariness, but there is one kind which goes together with nobility. The whole paragraph devoted to the philosopher, the first one, is 292, of which Mr. [student] has spoken. Let us turn to number 293.

**Reader:** “A man who says . . . well, *this* pity has value.”<sup>xvi</sup>

**LS:** The point is this. He speaks now without any qualifications or quotation marks, of the natural ruler. There is a connection between this and the preceding paragraph, which is devoted as a whole explicitly to the philosopher. To that extent there is a connection

---

<sup>xiv</sup> BGE 276. Kaufmann, 223.

<sup>xv</sup> BGE 288. Kaufmann, 228.

<sup>xvi</sup> BGE 293. Kaufmann, 230.

with the tradition, only what he says about the philosopher is not the same as what the earlier philosophers have said about him. We might read 294; again, because he takes issue here with the philosophers.

**Reader:** “*The Olympian vice . . . they cannot suppress laughter even during holy rites.*”<sup>xvii</sup>

**LS:** I have never found this passage in Hobbes, and I don’t think Nietzsche was ever a close student of Hobbes. It may just be an error, for all I know; or do you know the passage?

**Student:** Kaufmann gives it a whole very long footnote, discussing it.

**LS:** Oh, tell us. Read it.

**Student:** Well, he says that he didn’t find it either.

**Another student:** He cites four other passages that are close.

**A third student:** There are four passages where Hobbes discusses laughter, and none of them fits what Nietzsche has.

**LS:** Yes, that is easy: he discusses it in the chapters on the passions in the *Leviathan*; in *De Homine* and in *The Elements* there is nothing said about it of this nature. He regards [inaudible] his explanation of laughter is very simple: When you suddenly see someone fall, as he puts it, then you laugh; and when you yourself suddenly fall, then you weep. That is the gist of Hobbes’ definition. At any rate, the main point which Nietzsche makes here, and which hadn’t been made explicitly for some time before Nietzsche, is that philosophy is more akin to laughter than to compassion, and surely than to weeping. This is an old story.

Now we have come to one of the most beautiful passages of this work, if not of Nietzsche’s work as a whole. Let us just read a bit, and see what it suggests to us.

**Reader:** “The genius of the heart . . . mirror itself in them—the genius of the heart—”

**LS:** That is still one sentence.

**Reader:** “the genius of the heart who teaches . . . Of whom am I speaking to you?”<sup>xviii</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here for one moment. Apart from what Nietzsche says afterward, does this genius of the heart remind you of a phenomenon known to Nietzsche and also to you? Not in every point, but [inaudible].

---

<sup>xvii</sup> BGE 294. Kaufmann, 231-33.

<sup>xviii</sup> BGE 295. Kaufmann, 233-34.

**Student:** Socrates.

**LS:** Yes, exactly. But one must note that these things were never said about Socrates by Plato or by anybody else. One cannot say them more beautifully. I suppose that this is due not only to the fact that Nietzsche was particularly gifted in this kind of thing, but to the fact that there was a deep disagreement between, say, Plato and Nietzsche, which prevented Plato from saying these things about Socrates. Alcibiades comes, in a way, close to saying these things (in the *Banquet*, toward the end), but that is much cruder: Alcibiades was drunk at the time. But we can see that something about the difference between Plato or Socrates and Nietzsche comes up here. Because Nietzsche [inaudible] the genius of the heart as he understands it is the god Dionysus, of which Nietzsche says quite a few things. Now, about half a page later: “The fact already that Dionysus is a philosopher.”

**Reader:** “and that gods, too . . . no longer like to believe in God and gods.”<sup>xix</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. Does this remind you of something in Socrates or Plato, this assertion that Dionysus philosophizes or, more generally, that the gods philosophize? It formally contradicts what Socrates says in the *Banquet*: that gods *possess* wisdom, and therefore they do not have to *seek* wisdom. Seeking wisdom, that is to say philosophizing, is characteristic of man. So Nietzsche, in other words, brings gods and man much closer together than Socrates and Plato did. That, in a way, enhances the status of men while it does the opposite to the status of the gods. In the preceding number, 294, when he speaks about gods philosophizing and laughing, he says they laugh in a superhuman and new manner. Superhuman is of course derived grammatically from superman. The superman *is* higher than man, as is indicated and, according to the *Zarathustra* at any rate, there are no gods above him. This is surely not sufficient for an interpretation of this very remarkable aphorism, but it is the minimum, I believe, which one would have to say. One can perhaps refer to two other aphorisms in *Beyond Good and Evil*, which are relevant here: in number 9, he said that philosophy is the most spiritual will to power, to “the ‘creation of the world.’” And then read number 150; it is short.

**Reader:** “Around the hero everything turns into a tragedy; around the demi-god, into a satyr play; and around God—what? perhaps into ‘world’?”<sup>xx</sup>

**LS:** In other words, there *is* a connection between philosophy and God which corresponds somehow to the indications given in the present aphorism. So that is the culmination of the chapter on nobility, on *Vornehmheit*, and in a way also of the whole work, where the god is still higher than any human being, however aristocratic. Now, in which sense Nietzsche, especially the very late Nietzsche, believed in gods is very hard to say. I surely am unable to speak about that.

---

<sup>xix</sup> *BGE* 295. Kaufmann, 235.

<sup>xx</sup> *BGE* 150. Kaufmann, 90.

Now let us come to the last one, which I think is also hardly inferior in beauty to the one of which we read part.

**Reader:** “Alas, what are you after all . . . by our hand! We immortalize—”

**LS:** “We eternalize” would be slightly more literal.

**Reader:** “We eternalize what cannot live and fly . . . my old beloved—*wicked* thoughts!”<sup>xxi</sup>

**LS:** That is the ending: “thoughts,” not “truths.” That seems to be the end of this work. They are Nietzsche’s thoughts, but only his thoughts. The subtitle of the *Zarathustra* is “A Book for All and No One,” and “for no one” means also, strictly speaking, that is only a book for Nietzsche or for Zarathustra. We have seen this before: Mr. [student] noted it in his paper. The less common or vulgar thoughts are, the less are they communicable; and therefore, in the extreme case, they will not be communicable at all except by undergoing a transformation through the hearer. It is a transformation which they will undergo anyway, because in all things which do not belong to the exact sciences, such a transformation is necessarily implied in all understanding. At least so it seems. Therefore, it is no wonder when he suggested before for the first time the will to power as a formula for the essence of all being: a hypothesis, an interpretation, an essay, an attempt, a *Versuch*, a temptation—all these are implications that it must not be taken too hard and fast. In the movement from Nietzsche, even from Nietzsche’s writing, to our minds, some distortion is bound to take place. This is a kind of last warning.

There is also the other side of Nietzsche, as we will see very massively in the *Genealogy of Morals*: a teaching presents itself as a *teaching* and therefore, of course, not merely as thoughts, but as truth. One cannot understand these last two aphorisms unless one considers that they are the conclusion of the chapter dealing with nobility, with *Vornehmheit*. There is no bridge between the completely solitary thinker and others. This of course runs counter to the traditional view of the philosopher. Therefore you were wrong, Mr. [student], in believing that number 292, which begins with the words “a philosopher,” is in agreement with the tradition. Something has been radically changed. There is of course an easy formula for that: Nietzsche is, as people say, a philosopher-poet, and he is also in a strange way (not in the traditional sense of the term), religious. This unity of philosophy, poetry, and religion, of which we have some traces in number 295, is radically different from all philosophy in the traditional sense of the term. One cannot help being impressed, not to say overwhelmed, by these things.

Now in your paper, you said that you found a difficulty here, where Nietzsche speaks of the respect for old age, origin, and tradition characteristic of the masters, if I remember well. Can you restate that?

---

<sup>xxi</sup> BGE 296. Kaufmann, 236-37.

**Student:** It seems that the principle, so to speak, of expressing their own power and calling good what they are, is not very much developed in that, because a higher expression of their power and of themselves would be to overcome the past morality and somehow have something of their own.

**LS:** Yes, but you are burning the bridges; it doesn't go so quickly. First of all, you need low but national traditions before they can be overcome by something more comprehensive and higher than any national tradition. You can see it more simply if you look at the opposite: slaves do not have respect for their ancestors; they simply don't know their ancestors. There would be no way for them to know who generated them unless there were a strange similarity, like that mare in Thessaly, of which Aristotle speaks, who was called The Decent One, or The Just One<sup>xxii</sup>, because the foals to which she gave birth resembled the father in each case so much. But since this is a thing which happens in Thessaly more than in any other place, the conclusion is rather evident. Now, is there any point you would like to bring up?

**Student:** Do you regard the poem at the end of the book as being important?

**LS:** Is it not in agreement with the great problem which confronted us the whole time: is Nietzsche *teaching* like the earlier philosophers taught, especially regarding the will to power, or is this not teaching? We were confronted with that the whole time. Here he makes the distinction between *his* thoughts and truth. Truths are by their nature meant to be true for everyone who is capable to understand them (not for everyone simply, because there are always some qualifications needed for understanding the truth). But here the claim to intelligibility in the decisive respect seems to have been abandoned.

**Student:** You said towards the end that still, despite the change in the ranks of gods and men, Nietzsche considers a god higher than any human being.

**LS:** Yes, but the question, of course, is this: [in what way] the superman, the overman, is also higher than men.

**Student:** Okay, but leaving that aside, he said two things about this deity which I don't understand. One is his lack of shame; and the other is that he is not as humane as we humans are.

**LS:** Yes, but this is said with some irony because this god, Dionysus, wants men to become more beautiful and more "evil," literally translated. But the German word which we translate as "evil," *böse*, does not have this simple connotation of being evil in the sense of being wicked or malicious. For example, you also use it in German for getting angry. There is a certain ambiguity about the word. But take it even literally: given something which in the light of traditional morality would be regarded as evil, men should be *that* to a higher degree. Take a simple example: there is a thing called by the Greeks *hybris*, of which you may have heard, something like insolent pride. What

---

<sup>xxii</sup> It is not clear what Strauss is referring to here.

Dionysus says could be understood as follows: man has had too little of that *hybris* hitherto, a thought which today, I believe, could be stated easily in the [Chicago] *Sun-Times*. It lost its shocking character quite some time ago.

**Student:** That's true, but despite that, he says that in several respects all of the gods could learn from us humans.

**LS:** Which passage is that?

**Student:** The end of 295.

**LS:** That is clearly irony, because Dionysus says there he lacks a sense of shame by saying such things. There are altogether good reasons for surmising that in some points all gods might become our pupils: namely, because they don't have a sense of shame, no sense of respect for the *nomos*. Does it not make sense? And that is indeed [inaudible] Nietzsche pays a compliment here to the ordinary commonsensical way of thinking, which is a gracious thing, especially at the end of this particular aphorism. All right [end of tape].

---

<sup>1</sup> Changed from "That."



### Session 13: no date

**Leo Strauss:** You<sup>i</sup> surely did not succumb to the temptation to take this first treatise as an anticipatory statement of the Nazi position. There are quite a few passages which read [inaudible] this apparent praise of the blond beast, and also others. You took into consideration everything else you have read, and therefore were protected against this danger. Whether you did not lean over backwards, that would be the question. At any rate, your paper was very good. Thank you.

In the meantime, of course, what Nietzsche did to biblical morality, both Old and New Testament, was done to him by our [inaudible]. The early aristocracies are characterized according to Nietzsche by what is now called “aggressiveness;” and what do they say about aggressiveness today [inaudible] using Nietzsche’s psychology, but putting it to a different use?

**Student:** That we’ve got to channel our aggressions towards useful ends.

**LS:** Yes, but still, aggressiveness is something morbid. In other words, the same thing Nietzsche said about Biblical morality, that it is a kind of morbidity, is applied to this. Thank you again.

In trying to understand this work, we have to consider its subtitle first. The title is no longer surprising, because we have seen chapter 5 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, “Natural History of Morality.” “Genealogy” means the same thing, or almost the same. This is “A Polemical Writing;” how do they translate that?

**Student:** “An Attack;” but “A Polemic” would be better.

**LS:** Yes, “polemic,” that would be better. So, and that means already that Nietzsche is going down<sup>ii</sup>. It has another title at the [inaudible] page in the original—

**Student:** Good heavens, we don’t have it.

**LS:** “Added to *Beyond Good and Evil*, as a supplement and for the purpose of clarification.” This shows again that it is more clear, more popular than *Beyond Good and Evil*. Now, you did not speak about the Preface, which is perfectly all right, because otherwise you might have had less time for your paper. But we have to consider the Preface very briefly. Nietzsche presents himself in the first aphorism of the Preface as a man of objective knowledge, we can say. Yet as he makes clear in the next number, his thoughts stem from a basic “will for knowledge,” a term which he has used more than once: the basic will of knowledge. That’s to say, this knowledge is not merely objective,

---

<sup>i</sup> Strauss responds to a student’s paper, read at the start of the session. The reading was not recorded.

<sup>ii</sup> Presumably in the sense that Zarathustra goes down.

nor merely theoretical. We might perhaps read the end of aphorism 2 of the Preface. He had spoken of this basic will for knowledge; and now . . .

**Reader:** “A philosopher should proceed . . . of the trees—or of us, the philosophers?”<sup>iii</sup>

**LS:** Yes, you remember the last number of *Beyond Good and Evil*, when he spoke of his thoughts as distinguished from verities, or truths. As he makes clear in the Preface, his concern is not so much with the *origin* of morality but with its *value*. He is especially concerned with the value of unegoistic morality, or the morality of compassion. This concern with the value of morality means that it is, as Nietzsche puts it in paragraph 6, a critique of the moral values. He raises the question in paragraph 6 of whether morality could be the reason why man has never reached his highest mightiness and glory. Then, in the last paragraph, the critique of morality requires the study of morality, meaning, of actual moralities, morality as lived; that’s to say, of the history of morality. This will be the subject of this work, and in particular now of the first treatise, regarding good and evil.

Now, the first paragraph brings up the subject of the English again (of which we have heard so much in chapter 8 of *Beyond Good and Evil*), and especially of the English psychologists. He has in mind the contemporary English psychologists; there is only one whom he mentions later on, and that is Herbert Spencer. He does not mention Bagehot here, of whom quite a few things in this work reminded me: Bagehot’s *Physics and Politics*.<sup>iv</sup> Those who want to go a bit deeper into Nietzsche’s thought I believe should study Bagehot’s book. (Walter, I believe, is Bagehot’s first name.) Nietzsche thinks these psychologists are not very attractive, but that they are interesting, in contradistinction to their theories, because how is it possible for human beings to think that way? That makes them interesting. But he expresses the hope at the end that they might be men motivated by intellectual probity and not by [inaudible] this willingness to sacrifice to the truth every wish, and even to sacrifice every wish to the ugly moral verity, “for there are such verities.” But he leaves open what one has to think about these nineteenth-century psychologists. The fundamental defect is that they lack the historical spirit. What does this mean, here in Nietzsche?

**Student:** I think that they don’t take into account history, and they build their psychology *a priori* from certain postulates rather than seeing what men actually were like and actually did.

**LS:** Yes, but I think more specifically, because they think that men are fundamentally the same now as they were in the early period and in very remote periods. That is the absolutization of present-day man. I think this is the more simple meaning of that. The key point of these utilitarian doctrines is that they say that things have been called “good” from the point of view of the recipients of good things, whereas according to Nietzsche—

<sup>iii</sup> *Genealogy*, Preface, 2. Golffing, 150.

<sup>iv</sup> Walter Bagehot (b. 1826), British essayist, economist, and journalist (he was an important and prominent contributor to *The Economist*). *Physics and Politics* appeared in 1872.

and that is a key assertion of his—the primary meaning of such things as good/bad or good/evil, *especially* good/bad, stems not from the recipients but from the creators, only there is a difference between the creativity of the warriors and the creativity of the priests, to which we will come later.

Let us see. We might perhaps read first a bit later. In number 7 we have Nietzsche's characterization of the aristocratic morality: good=to noble (i.e. of noble origin), mighty, beautiful, happy, and beloved by the gods. That is this fundamental equation. We have to see how this works out. Now, what is the alternative to the warrior morality or, let us say, warrior-conqueror morality? That is the priestly morality. He begins to speak of that in number 6. We will read perhaps the first half of that.

**Reader:** “Granting that political . . . (though difficulties might arise later)—”<sup>v</sup>

**LS:** “Exception,” he says: It is no exception at first (although it might give occasion for exception).<sup>vi</sup> In other words, what does he say here? The primary phenomenon is political supremacy; and this political supremacy leads then to the assertion of, say, moral supremacy; that's the point. This has something in common with the Marxist view, of course.

**Student:** That whoever controls the society establishes its value?

**LS:** Yes, in this sense, only Nietzsche doesn't consider the possibility of any connection with economics, of course. Go on, Mr. [student].

**Reader:** “if the ruling caste is also . . . opposing each other as signs of class—”

**LS:** You remember what we discussed last time, about cleanliness? Cleanliness and uncleanness, purity and impurity?

**Reader:** “and here, too, *good* and *bad* . . . in abomination—hardly more than that.”<sup>vii</sup>

**LS:** No, in the German it is better: not more, not much more. That is a characteristically Nietzschean turn. There is of course something more in it, but it is not noticeable to a man who simply looks at [? a world behavior]<sup>viii</sup>. That is here beautifully expressed. Now, there is something morbid in these priestly aristocracies from the very beginning, he says; but then he makes a point, which was properly emphasized by Mr. [student], toward the end of this paragraph: “With priests, everything becomes more dangerous.”

**Reader:** “Among the priests everything . . . desire for power, disease.”<sup>ix</sup>

---

<sup>v</sup> *Genealogy*, First Essay, 6. Golffing, 165.

<sup>vi</sup> Presumably Strauss's translation.

<sup>vii</sup> *Genealogy*, First Essay, 6. Golffing, 165.

<sup>viii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>ix</sup> *Genealogy*, First Essay, 6. Golffing, 166.

**LS:** Virtue, it also says: Desire for power, virtue, disease.

**Student:** Just omitted by Golffing.

**LS:** Well, apparently he doesn't take much interest [inaudible].

**Student:** [Inaudible] in virtue at all!

**LS:** The simplest explanation.

**Reader:** "In all fairness . . . been able to develop into an interesting creature—"

**LS:** No, not creature: interesting animal. I would even translate it as beast. There you made some minor corrections of Nietzsche, justified by the translation. The interesting beast—in other words, these earlier warrior-society's members were not interesting beasts; they were somehow impressive, but not interesting.

**Reader:** "that only here has the human mind grown—"

**LS:** Human soul.

**Reader:** "grown both profound and evil . . . over the rest of creation."<sup>x</sup>

**LS:** In other words, the warrior type as described was not evil; it appeared to be evil from the perspective of the priests, but not in itself. But since some evil is an essential ingredient to the higher kind of man, therefore without these priestly evaluations higher man would never have come into being. We have heard this already in *Beyond Good and Evil*. The point which he makes then in the sequel is this (and there you were perhaps not quite clear): you have the warriors, the conquerors, the rulers; and then of course you have also the ruled, the slaves. The slaves develop another kind of morality—obviously they are not the happy ones and so on; they are debarred from all good things. But what Nietzsche is concerned with is not slave morality as slave morality but the understanding of the slave morality as non-slave morality, as the high and true morality. This can be understood only if we take into consideration the priests. The priests transform slave morality, which in itself is also uninteresting, into something interesting. We must see how this happens.

**Student:** Where do the priests come from? From which class, the ruled or the rulers?

**LS:** That does not [inaudible] as priests. In this paragraph he speaks of a priestly caste, which, where it exists (as in India), is the highest caste. But they do not have the specific qualities of the warrior caste: they are not armed and they owe their authority not to these massive qualities to which the warriors owe their authority. They have not conquered simply, but they have conquered the others by appeals to something else. That is in no

---

<sup>x</sup> *Genealogy*, First Essay, 6. Golffing, 166.

way developed here.

**Student:** You mean, it doesn't matter about the Biblical priesthood, that the priestly class may have been the ruling class?

**LS:** Well, Nietzsche of course had to rely here on the scholarship of his time. I happen to know that he used Wellhausen especially, and Wellhausen was of course a man of genius, regardless of whether his doctrines are true or not.<sup>xi</sup> According to Wellhausen (Nietzsche refers to this somewhere, I think in a later writing, *The Anti-Christ*), originally the Jews were a healthy people like any other people. They had their leaders in war and men like the judges and the kings. Then, from a certain moment on, the priests took over, and this is especially the case after the Babylonian exile, of course. After this, the whole history of Israel was falsified. Wellhausen's starting point is not unsound: he makes a comparison between the books of Samuel and Kings with the Chronicles, and then he sees that the Chronicles are much more "priestly" than the book of Samuel, or Kings, or Judges. Then he makes this proportion. Since he could take it for granted that the early, say, historical books proper were not the original works but were already (how shall I say?) transformed by editors and priests, then he argues along this proportion [LS writes on the blackboard]: OS: JSK=JSK: Ch: say, if these are the Chronicles—the latest stratum, so to speak—and here we have, say, Judges-Samuel-Kings as we have them now—then Chronicles is to Judges-Samuel-Kings as Judges-Samuel-Kings would be to the "original source," let us say, whatever it would be called. In other words, the original Jews were still less priestly. They were wholly unpriestly; they were natural.

There are some signs of this: there is this beautiful passage in the beginning of Judges that says that the Israelites did not conquer the valley because they did not have iron chariots. This is a natural explanation. Then you find also in the same context that they did not conquer the valley because God did not wish them to, so that there would always be some gadflies around, and so on, and so on. That is of course according to theological/priestly thought as distinguished from natural thought.<sup>xii</sup> Now, what was the question to which I [inaudible]?

**Student:** The original question was whether it matters that the priestly class represented the ruling class.

**LS:** Well, surely in India, with the Brahmans. But in Israel [?less so]<sup>xiii</sup>.

**Student:** In the second commonwealth.

**LS:** Yes, in second commonwealth. The basis for that is biblical history, biblical history along the lines of Wellhausen, especially. This has radically changed in the meantime

---

<sup>xi</sup> Julius Wellhausen (b. 1844), German Orientalist and biblical scholar.

<sup>xii</sup> Cf. Judges 1.19 with 2.3.

<sup>xiii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

because of the discovery of the Near East, Babylon, and so on, which was in Nietzsche's time practically unknown [inaudible] but we cannot go into that.

This transformation of the primary slave morality into the priestly morality (which of course did not take place in India, according to Nietzsche, but only in Judea) stems from resentment, according to Nietzsche. That is in Nietzsche a term of art: it is a certain morbidity of the soul, which has something to do with envy and such things. The key point is that it is not and cannot be straightforward. Feeling one's own weakness, one can assert oneself only in indirect ways which would always be kinds of lies, but of lies which cannot be called lies because they are much too complicated in their origins. A lie, after all, is in its way a straightforward thing: you say the opposite of what is true, *knowing* that it is not true. The trouble in the resentment morality is that the resentment-filled man *believes* these things. Let us turn to the beginning of number 10 first.

**Reader:** "The slave revolt in morals begins by rancor turning creative and giving birth to values—"

**LS:** That is, in Nietzsche's German, resentment, *ressentiment*. I think one should leave it at resentment, only observing (as one could easily) that this is a term of art and not what we ordinarily call resentment. What he means goes much deeper.

**Reader:** "giving birth to values . . . that *no* is its creative act."

**LS:** In other words, the primary act of aristocratic morality is a yes to itself: "*we*, the good"; whereas in slave morality, the primary act is a negation, namely, a negation of the aristocratic values.

**Reader:** "This reversal of direction . . . all its action is reaction."

**LS:** He describes it then in opposition to the warrior morality, let us say. Read a little bit later: "If the noble way of evaluation makes a mistake." Two sentences later.

**Reader:** "Aristocratic valuations may go amiss . . . opponent, though only in effigy."<sup>xiv</sup>

**LS:** We will leave it at that. Contempt for the lower classes is characteristic of the high morality, whereas the priestly, resentment morality has not contempt against the other but indignation. That is for Nietzsche the key distinction here on this level of the argument. Then in number 11, he famously equates the masters to the blond beasts while speaking not only of the Germans of course but also of the Romans, Arabs, Japanese, Homeric heroes, Scandinavian Vikings, and so on. Now begin at this point. Do you have where he speaks of the blond [inaudible]? Well, you can begin a little bit before, because we must read these [inaudible] "They have very strict demands regarding the members of their own group-self-control, friendship, fidelity," and so on.

---

<sup>xiv</sup> *Genealogy*, First Essay, 10. Golffing, 170-71.

**Reader:** “Once abroad in the wilderness, they revel . . . They revert to the innocence of wild beasts—”

**LS:** Literally: They revert into the innocence of the conscience of a beast of prey. That is just like a point before when he said “not more, not much more.” Now he doesn’t say “beast of prey” [literally], because they are human beings. They can’t be beasts of prey literally. He indicates this by speaking of the conscience of the beast of prey. “They revert into the innocence of the conscience of the beast of prey.”

**Reader:** “we can imagine them returning . . . And even their highest culture shows an awareness of this trait—”

**LS:** No, no: Even on the basis of their highest culture, there reveals itself an awareness of it.

**Reader:** “and a certain pride in it . . . monuments to itself *for both good and evil*.”<sup>xv</sup>

**LS:** Well, this is one of the few historical documents which Nietzsche gives for his thesis.<sup>xvi</sup> Some of you will know the funeral speech. Is this a correct interpretation? Of course Nietzsche translated it well, there is no doubt; but the question is whether he interpreted correctly. What does Pericles mean when he says that “[t]hey left everywhere memorials of evil and good, of bad things and good”? It is very ambiguous because, after all, that was not written by Pericles, but by Thucydides. We have left everywhere documents of the good we did to us *or* we did to others, and of the bad things which we inflicted *and* which were inflicted on us. That, I think, is what Pericles meant there, and the reference to the blond beast there by Nietzsche does not belong to that. And there is one more very simple thing: the whole funeral speech is a presentation of Athens in contradistinction to Sparta, and Sparta was much closer to the blond beast than Athens was. But of course Nietzsche says here that even in their highest culture they still have a recollection of that.

**Reader:** “This ‘boldness’ of noble races . . . the Goth or the Vandal.”

**LS:** Yes, but again in here there is a great question. Here, surely the fact that these questions [inaudible] the daring is here described as an Athenian quality in contradistinction to the lack of daring of the Spartans. So we would have to [inaudible]. But let us see one more example which he gives here.

**Reader:** “The profound and icy suspicion . . . despoiled, brutalized, sold into slavery.”<sup>xvii</sup>

**LS:** Now wait a moment. To what does he refer in Hesiod? With what right does Nietzsche make this statement, that the golden and the bronze age<sup>xviii</sup> refer to the same

<sup>xv</sup> *Genealogy*, First Essay, 11. Golffing, 174-75.

<sup>xvi</sup> Thucydides 2.41

<sup>xvii</sup> *Genealogy*, First Essay, 11. Golffing, 175.

<sup>xviii</sup> In *Works and Days*, Hesiod divides human epochs into gold, silver, and iron.

kind of man, only looked at from different points of view? I think there is not a shred of evidence in Hesiod for what he says. *The* difficulty in Hesiod is rather that he seems to present the races in a descending order: gold, silver, bronze, and iron. But then at a certain point between bronze and iron, he brings in the heroes, so that it is not simply a descending order but descending, ascending, and descending again. One would have to understand this in the context that the golden age, and probably also the silver age, belong to the reign of Zeus, whereas the other ages of which he speaks [inaudible] no, belong to the age of Cronos, I beg your pardon, whereas the other three ages belong to the reign of Zeus. I believe what Hesiod does is intelligible; it would lead me now too far afield. At any rate, this is one of the two documents, apart from the etymological examples, which Nietzsche gives in order to substantiate his doctrine; and since this is emphatically meant to be in agreement with history, there should be more of history here and less of psychology. Now, let us see. The clearest presentation of the problem I believe we find in number 13.

**Reader:** “But to return to business . . . demands to be completed.”

**LS:** In other words, we know now the origin of the good as understood by the warriors or conquerors, that’s easy. It’s the other that is the complication. And now Nietzsche makes it clear to the meanest capacities what the problem is.

**Reader:** “There is nothing very odd about lambs disliking birds of prey—”

**LS:** *big* birds of prey.

**Reader:** “but this is no reason . . . intrinsically wrong with such an argument—”

**LS:** “with such an idea.” In other words, this simple slave morality, the morality of the inferiors is perfectly all right: sure that lambs won’t like eagles. No one can blame the lambs for that, and there is nothing fishy in that which calls for a depth psychology. But what will be the reaction of the eagles?

**Reader:** “the birds of prey will look . . . nothing tastes better than a tender lamb.”

**LS:** Up to this point, everything is clear. And now comes the difficulty.

**Reader:** “To expect that strength . . . behind the strong a neutral agent—”

**LS:** Substratum.

**Reader:** “a neutral substratum, free to manifest its strength or contain it.”<sup>xix</sup>

**LS:** That is decisive for the sequel. In other words, the strong *has* to be strong, cannot help being strong, cannot help but act strongly; the weak cannot help acting weakly. This

---

<sup>xix</sup> *Genealogy*, First Essay, 13. Golffing, 178.



is clear. The absurdity comes in when this necessity is understood as a choice. Let us see; we cannot [inaudible]. He gives other examples; below he speaks of the atom, the Kantian thing-in-itself, and similar kinds of popular logic.

**Reader:** “Small wonder, then, that the oppressed . . . taken advantage of this superstition—”

**LS:** Belief.

**Reader:** “of this belief and in fact espouse . . . the patient, the humble, the just ones—”<sup>xx</sup>

**LS:** In other words, that alone is the falsification. To repeat: there is nothing dark or wrong about the fact that there are strong and weak ones, for which different ways of acting are necessities. The wrongness comes in when the strong and the weak are regarded as free to be strong or to be weak, when moral imputation becomes possible, so that there can be moral indignation against the strong and moral satisfaction on the part of the weak. This is the key problem, according to Nietzsche here.

We do not have to read the rest; we do not have time for that. Nietzsche has of course to give us some proof of the truth of his assertion; after all, this is a plausible psychological theory for some people, once you grant his premises. This proof he gives in number 15. He has already referred to it before, but the key point is this: these people who condemn pride—let us take this example, pride—they themselves are proud. They condemn hatred, and they themselves hate. They condemn revenge, and they themselves are vengeful. In other words, the Biblical morality, especially Christian morality, is measured by its own standards and then it is said to be radically defective: what presents itself as love is shot through with hatred, and therefore we are entitled not to take its self-interpretation seriously but to see that these ordinary passions like hate, revenge, and so on, are inevitable. You cannot be sensibly commanded to love your enemy. That would be the implication of what Nietzsche says here, as distinguished from what he says in other places. Let us read the beginning of number 15.

**Reader:** “Faith in what? . . . Thomas Aquinas, the great teacher and saint. *The blessed in the celestial kingdom . . . will see the pains of the damned, the better to enjoy their blessedness.*”<sup>xxi</sup>

**LS:** Yes, here he has some evidence; but what is the value of that evidence? Nietzsche does not indicate where he read it; I don’t think he read very much in Thomas Aquinas. He probably copied it [inaudible]. I happen to know that it occurs in the supplement to the *Summa Theologica*, in the 94th question, and this supplement is surely not by Thomas Aquinas. It still received a certain approbation by the school of Thomas, obviously, but that is still not Thomas himself. And as for Tertullian, whom he quotes then, every

<sup>xx</sup> *Genealogy*, First Essay, 13. Golffing, 179.

<sup>xxi</sup> *Genealogy*, First Essay, 15. Golffing 183. The reader has translated the Latin in the original: “*Beati in regno coelesti*, he says, meek as a lamb, *videbunt poenas damnatorum, ut beatitudo illis magis complaceat.*”

Christian could very well say that he is a heretic, and therefore he should not be adduced as evidence in this matter. That there are difficulties to interpret, for example, the *auto da fés* of the inquisitions as acts of love, I would be the last to deny. But I would not doubt the good faith of quite a few of the Dominicans, that they would have done the same thing to their nearest and dearest as well, if they had been guilty of heresy or especially of relapse.

In number 16, he then comes to his conclusion. The conclusion is this: In this fight (which, symbolically stated, as Nietzsche does), is a fight between pagan Rome and Judea. Judea has won—of course not in a crude way, because the Romans destroyed the Temple; but the Jewish spirit won via Christianity. And Christianity is as it were still more Jewish than Judaism; that's Nietzsche's point. Therefore, this is the present situation. Original Rome, Nietzsche asserts, reasserted itself in the Renaissance—he thinks, of course, although he does not mention the names here, of people like Cesare Borgia. Somewhere he speaks of the possibility, which did exist for some time, that Cesare Borgia might have become the Pope. That would have been, of course, the greatest triumph of the pagan Renaissance which we could think of. This reassertion of pagan Rome was, however, prevented by the Reformation: it was the fault of the Germans and the English. And then again repeated, it was prevented by the French Revolution. But precisely in the moment of the French Revolution, there was a last appearance, as it were, of the other principle in Napoleon. We can perhaps read the end of this paragraph.

**Reader:** “Like a last signpost to an *alternative* route . . . brutish with the more than human, did represent—”<sup>xxii</sup>

**LS:** Here you see this synthesis of *Unmensch* and *Übermensch*. What is *Unmensch*—can one say that in English?

**Student:** Inhuman is [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, say, a synthesis of the inhuman and superhuman. Whether Napoleon is [inaudible] he also doesn't call him the incarnation of the noble ideal itself, but the incarnated *problem* of the noble ideal; because however much one might admire Napoleon, he is not striking as a very noble man, as Nietzsche himself says in other places. This is a very [?crucial chapter]<sup>xxiii</sup>. You didn't say anything about the Note.

**Student:** I wasn't sure whether or not we were supposed to treat it as part of the [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, that is very hard. There is of course a deep irony in these things, but on the other hand it is not merely ironical. Nietzsche believes that historical inquiries, and

---

<sup>xxii</sup> *Genealogy*, First Essay, 16. Golffing, 187.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

therefore also particular etymological inquiries, *would* throw light on the history of morality. Do you have this Note in this translation?

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Which question does he ask the academies to propose?

**Reader:** “*What light does the science of linguistics . . . evolution of moral ideas?*”

**LS:** This is a very sensible thing *if* it can be done, given the very dangerous character of etymological inquiries. Then he indicates the deeper questions involved: “worth for what purpose?” Then, “For example.”

**Reader:** “For example, something obviously valuable . . . true hierarchy of values.”

**LS:** This question—that the social scientist has no right to be naively egalitarian, I think is still a proper demand and a necessary demand. In other words, it is a question whether this objective social science as we know it and cherish it, and which is supposed to be value-free, has not built-in value judgments which make it a kind of propaganda for certain political and social purposes. This in itself would be all right but for the claim that they are the mouthpieces of *the* truth. This makes it always a problem.

We have to use the short time which we still have for some reflections on this brilliantly-written treatise, but which is of course also on a considerably lower level than *Beyond Good and Evil*. The etymologies which Nietzsche uses are purely hypothetical; one cannot do anything with them. What strikes one first is this: he wants to understand the primary meaning of good and evil, and he goes back to the origins. And where does he find the origins? In the warriors, in conquering societies. But where was man originally? Were men originally conquering human beings? Was there not a necessity for these conquerors to be a group before they could engage in conquering? So we would have to assume that there was something like a horde or herds; and the question is: how would *they* have understood good and bad, before we could understand the transformation which good and bad underwent by virtue of the conquest.

Now it is obvious that any group of men, however early or primitive or however you call it, must have spoken of good and bad. We must think of the very great breadth of the terms good and bad as distinguished from good and evil: for example, good food, good soil, good cows, and so on; and of course also in the same meaning, good and bad *men*: good in the sense of helpful, of course, and bad as damaging. But if we grant Nietzsche his unhistorical starting point of the warrior society, Nietzsche argues as follows. The non-spiritual necessarily precedes the spiritual, because the spiritual is a later stage of the development; therefore the society ruled by warriors precedes the society ruled by priests. The priest-ruled society is secondary and therefore reactive to the warrior society. He goes beyond that and says that the priestly way of thinking is not only qualifiedly reactive but absolutely reactive, and that means that it is determined by resentment. Mr. [student]

rightly referred to the passages about Judaism and Christianity in *Beyond Good and Evil* as a kind of counterweight to the extreme statements here.

Someone asked me last time about the letter of Nietzsche to Overbeck<sup>xxiv</sup> about the Greeks and the Jews. I noted it down. The letter is dated February 23, 1887. But in order to understand Nietzsche's thought, we have to go to a deeper stratum, to the analysis of good and bad. Nietzsche has said what the characteristic equation of the warrior is: good=beautiful. That of course holds good in the Greek: the *kaloi k'agathoi* are the gentlemen: literally translated, the beautiful and the good: the happy, those who are pleased with themselves, with their lot, with the world as it is. From this it would follow that those who are not pleased with themselves, their lot, and the world as it is, will seek another life, another world, the afterlife, life eternal. This is what Nietzsche asserts in the *Zarathustra*, that the desire for the eternal, the unchangeable, and never-perishing, stems from the spirit of revenge. But there, [in *Zarathustra*], the spirit of revenge does not have this narrow social connotation which it has here. His demand in the *Zarathustra* to remain loyal to the earth, i.e., not to orient oneself by a heavenly life after this life, but by unqualified worldliness in opposition to the longing for eternity as stemming from the spirit of revenge—this is doubtless a much deeper stratum than the one presented here.

There is another point which we would have to consider and which I would like to mention, at least. Nietzsche makes a distinction between two kinds of goodness. He presents himself as an immoralist, which means he is concerned with a goodness beyond moral goodness. Moral goodness he treats here as something absolutely negligible. We have seen also other statements of this in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Now this concern with two kinds of goodness—with one, which is not moral and with another, which is moral, is not peculiar to Nietzsche. An important example would be of Rousseau. Rousseau makes the distinction in the *Emile* and in other works between *bonté*, goodness, and *vertu*, virtue. Man is by nature good, according to Rousseau's assertion, but he is not by nature virtuous because goodness means he is not by nature vicious. Well, he will of course be not necessarily nasty because—how does Locke put it so beautifully?—men have a natural desire for self-preservation, and that is absolutely innocent. They do not want to hurt other people, but there may be competition. The same bone, as it were, or piece of meat, may be necessary for the survival of one and not sufficient for the other. Or there are other examples of the two shipwrecked men on the plank, and in that case, of course, each man would think of himself first, it's perfectly all right. This is also accepted by Rousseau, naturally. This is still goodness, innocence. Only if you are vicious without any need, in order to feel yourself superior or what have you, and are concerned with hurting others, then and only then are you evil. Virtue, however, presupposes subjection to the moral law and consists in resisting one's impulses. The good man does not have impulses to hurt others; he follows his natural inclinations, in the present-day sense of the term, but these natural inclinations are as such good. Malice, or glory, pride, and so on, are not natural inclinations, according to Rousseau.

<sup>xxiv</sup> "Incidentally, these Greeks have a great deal on their conscience—falsification was their real trade; the whole of European psychology is sick with Greek *superficialities*, and without the modicum of Judaism and so on, and so on." In *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Christopher Middleton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 261.

Prior to Rousseau, Machiavelli made a distinction in the same words, between goodness, *bontà*, and virtue, *virtù*. Occasionally (as in the *Discourses*, Book I, chapter 17) he speaks of a man's "goodness together with his virtue," which indicates clearly that these are two different things. Now, Machiavelli understands sometimes by "virtue" what people ordinarily understand by virtue: namely, human goodness. But these are not the characteristically Machiavellian references to virtue, where virtue means the qualities which Cesare Borgia, among others, has. I don't believe I have to belabor this point. The characteristically Machiavellian virtue is virtue in an emphatic sense: great strength, wiliness, and whatever belongs to that.

This distinction between goodness and virtue has a certain support also in Cicero, and in other writers. In his *Offices*, Book 1, paragraph 20, he says, speaking of the various virtues: "Of the three remaining divisions, the most extensive in its application is the principle by which society and what we may call its common bonds are maintained. Of this again there are two divisions: justice, in which is the crowning glory of the virtues, and on the basis of which men are called good men."

So a good man simply is a just man. On the basis of other passages here (for example, in *Offices*, Book 2, paragraphs 35 and 38), one can say justice, temperance, and things related to them, like reliability, make a man good, a *vir bonus*. The other virtues are not so essential for goodness in the common ordinary sense of the word, which means wisdom and courage are not essential. When we mean a good man, then we mean a man who is just and temperate; we do not necessarily mean a wise and a courageous man.

That this is not merely due to Roman usage or to the Stoic sources of Cicero, but has a much broader meaning, [as] we see from Plato's *Republic*. There are two virtues required of every member of that society, and which are [inaudible]. Well, justice and temperance. Courage and wisdom are different; they are the preserve of a minority. Therefore it is of course implied in this—this is all borrowed from popular language, both in Cicero and Plato, but tellingly so—that there is an ingredient of contempt for the man who is *only*, in the ordinary sense of the words, just and temperate. In other words, he is a harmless fellow. Of course, it is very important that most people are harmless, but it is not necessarily the highest quality in man. Take such an apparently extreme example as Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias* (of whom some of you must have been reminded here, as quite a few people have been reminded of Callicles when reading these passages in Nietzsche). Callicles is also concerned with excellence, to use a term which does not decide the issue in advance. For Callicles, virtue is courage and cleverness combined; one can say that is exactly what Machiavelli means by *virtù*. In other words, the concern with a kind of human excellence which is not moral excellence doesn't stem from Nietzsche; it antedates him. Even such a (in the highest sense of the word) *conformist* book like Aristotle's *Ethics* shows signs of it: when he discusses, towards the end, the status of the theoretical and contemplative virtues compared with that of the moral virtues, the theoretical virtues win out. Wisdom wins out, that is obvious. There is a very great question here, which Aristotle does not answer there: Does wisdom presuppose or does it not presuppose moral virtue? This is not stated by Aristotle. An answer to this grave

question is given by Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa*, when he says that of all intellectual virtues, only prudence or practical wisdom is inseparable from moral virtue, i.e., theoretical wisdom is separable from it. We will find some discussions of Nietzsche regarding this subject in the third treatise of the *Genealogy of Morals*, which is quite amazing because I do not think that Nietzsche was aware of these things. Well, such a man like he was can have sensed quite a few things without being able to quote chapter and verse, as “We Scholars” are in the habit of doing.

One thing is of course very striking in the first treatise here, as you may have seen. When he described this early conqueror society, not a word is said, if my recollection is correct, of their notions of justice; and they had of course notions of [inaudible]. There must have been some provisions regarding inheritances and other actions among the members, such as a concern with what happens to children when their father has fallen in battle—the whole concern with orphans, widows, and all other weak people protected somehow by Zeus. There must have been something of that in that early noble morality. At any rate, Nietzsche is, if not simply silent, then practically silent about it. In the next treatise we must see whether his treatment of justice in the second treatise fills that lacuna or not.

[end of session]

## Session 14: no date

**Leo Strauss:** A crucial point, a crucial section of your paper<sup>i</sup> concerned this question: What is the relation of the inventors of the bad conscience and the slave? Can you restate what you said about that relation?

**Student:** Well, the original inventor of bad conscience, from section 17, seems to be a member of the population which was overcome by the blond beast, the masters.

**LS:** And hence, to make it quite clear, he would be a slave.

**Student:** He would be a slave, yes.

**LS:** I see. And what is the difference between the slave as presented in treatise two, as distinguished from the slave as presented in treatise one?

**Student:** Well, in treatise one the slave has been [inaudible].

**LS:** You stated it in your paper but you have to [inaudible].

**Student:** In treatise one the slave has been evidently influenced by the priests to the extent that he feels resentment against the masters. In treatise two he feels resentment only against himself.

**LS:** Yes but this slave, who [inaudible] of treatise one: is he not already, as you said, influenced by the priest?

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Therefore not simply the slave, whereas here he speaks of the slave simply.

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Yes. Now there is only one point I would like to say regarding the subject of this treatise. The connection between guilt and debts seems to be far-fetched, perhaps. In German the word for “guilt” and for “debt” is the same. So there is a connection [inaudible] the etymological connection is quite obvious in German, whereas it is less obvious in other languages. Whether that is a good enough reason for Nietzsche’s hypothesis is another question.

You spoke of men driven by economic need, who acquired [inaudible]. That brings Nietzsche rather close to Marx, doesn’t it? The question is what is the [?purpose]<sup>ii</sup> of this

<sup>i</sup> Strauss responds to a student’s paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

<sup>ii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

somewhat strange doctrine: to find in [?an exchange]<sup>iii</sup> the root of all moral relations? We must turn to that. I remind you now of the difficulty we had in the first treatise: is good/bad, as Nietzsche understood it in the first treatise, the original and primitive distinction between good and bad? Is there not a more basic stratum? Nietzsche deals with a more basic stratum in the second treatise, which he devotes to guilt, to the notion of right, and the like. There was complete or almost complete silence with respect to right in the first treatise. But does right not form a central part of the aristocratic society? One only has to think of the themes of Greek tragedy, which go back to old myth—incest, matricide, parricide, fratricide, and so on. Why does Nietzsche abstract from this ingredient of the noble morality in the first treatise? And in the second treatise, where he is concerned with the origin of *dikē*, of right, and traces it to debts and the relation of debtor and creditor, why does he [?degrade]<sup>iv</sup> *dikē* in the second treatise [by tracing to debts]? Those would seem to be obvious difficulties. Now we begin at the beginning of [inaudible] with number one.

**Student:** A textual note. The Samuels translation in the Modern Library Giant having proved much better than the Golfing upon comparison, I'm using it, and recommend it to you.

**LS:** Oh that's true [inaudible]. I'm surprised, because I had a good impression of Kaufmann's translation.

**Student:** No, the Golfing.

**LS:** Oh [inaudible], I see.

**Reader:** "The breeding of an animal . . . in regard to man?"<sup>v</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. This seems to imply a teleological understanding of nature. Nature sets itself a task, this task. For the understanding of this question of promising, which presupposes, Nietzsche makes clear, remembering that you have promised [inaudible]. You should read the beginning of Nietzsche's second *Consideration Out of Season*<sup>vi</sup>, where he develops this point that remembering is a peculiarly human thing.

Somewhat later in the same aphorism, he will make clear that [inaudible] Nietzsche speaks of man having [inaudible] has bred in himself this kind of memory, a memory of the will. You remember, so nature is [inaudible]. This shows the difficulty of that. Nietzsche makes clear in number two that one must return to pre-history in order to appreciate properly the end of the process. Here Nietzsche makes quite clear that he is going back to a more basic stratum than he had reached in the first treatise. Now [inaudible] but if one doesn't know the beginning, as it were, one cannot properly appreciate the end, and vice versa. The end, as presented in number two, is the sovereign

<sup>iii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>iv</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>v</sup> Genealogy, Second Essay, 1. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 668.

<sup>vi</sup> Untimely Meditations.



individual. “The sovereign individual” (the two words are underlined in [inaudible]), that’s to say the individual who is beyond both the good and bad of the aristocratic morality, the social morality, and of course [?good/evil]<sup>vii</sup> too. To this extent, the second treatise has a broader perspective than the first treatise. This sovereign individual, who can promise, is simply the master and it is simply, as you see in the second half of that paragraph, this man who has become free that has a right to promise. This master of the free will, this [inaudible].

**Reader:** “finds in his possession his *standard of value* . . . as he honours his peers—”

**LS:** No, no, before that.

**Reader:** Oh.

**LS:** “how should he not know which superiority.”

**Reader:** “how is it possible for him not to know . . . over nature, over all creatures—”

**LS:** “Over nature.” That is [inaudible].

**Reader:** “over nature . . . .”

**LS:** That is the key point. Therefore the man of the aristocratic morality of the first treatise would not have this superiority, obviously. Now this man who [inaudible] that is a man who has a conscience, who is responsible. He corresponds somehow to what [inaudible] you remember what we read in the *Zarathustra* about the late emergence of the individual. Nietzsche refers [inaudible] to the same phenomenon. But was there not responsibility, and conscience, we can say, before the emergence of the sovereign individual? After all, this is not [inaudible] there is conscience possible, and more than possible, before the emergence of the sovereign individual, in the age of the camel. You remember who takes on the heaviest possible burdens? Now of course Nietzsche does not deny that, as you can see from the next aphorism.

We cannot read [inaudible] here is a reference here in [inaudible] at the beginning of the second half of the next [?number]<sup>viii</sup>. What first had to be acquired? A few primitive requirements for social living together. So we are [?really driven]<sup>ix</sup> back to the most basic stratum.<sup>1</sup> He begins at the beginning. This implies of course that the men, who had to learn his few primitive requirements of social living together, were pre-social. We have something like the Hobbean, Lockean, and so on, state of nature. Let us see then. [Inaudible] So I repeat the point. In the second treatise Nietzsche goes back to a more fundamental stratum.

---

<sup>vii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>viii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>ix</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

What links Nietzsche to the Englishmen you may see also very clearly in number four, When . . . you'll read perhaps the third or fourth sentence, Mr. [student], when he speaks of the previous genealogists of morality.

**Reader:** "Have these current genealogists of morals . . . idea of 'ought'—"

**LS:** Of what?

**Reader:** "Ought," *Schuld*.

**LS:** *Schuld* is [inaudible] guilt.

**Reader:** "originates from the very material idea of 'owe'?"<sup>x</sup>

**LS:** [?Or of]<sup>xi</sup> debt. Here you see that the moral is derivative from the material. That is [inaudible] reminds one very much of Marxism. Marx, as you know, although he was not an Englishman, lived in England. That had very much to do with [inaudible]. When we read this here and quite a bit later, we are surprised that Nietzsche abstracts from religion (or if you please, superstition), as he had in the first treatise. How is it possible to understand early men on the basis of such an abstraction? But you will see Nietzsche will bring in religion later on. He is very much concerned with bringing out this point about the material origin, or the materialistic origin, we can say, of the notion of guilt. Why does he do that? I think that is the most obvious difficulty, for me at least, in this treatise. He speaks then in number five of the origin of the promise. This is the question which guides him. For example, could one not say that there is guilt also in other respects, for example the guilt [from] the slaying of a man? Why should this not be as primary as the guilt stemming from debts?

Nietzsche seems to imply that in the case of murder, for example, and such crimes, there is not explicitly a promise not to murder one's fellow, and in particular one's brother or father, whereas in the case of debts, there is explicitly a promise, so [inaudible]. But this, of course, doesn't help very much. Why does he make promise the *explicandum*, the thing to be explained? What could drive him to that? That's very hard to say. We must wait; perhaps we'll find the solution later. At any rate, this he seems to assert rather dogmatically, that promising and therefore the creditor-debtor relation is the sphere from which all higher moral notions, at least those connected with right, have risen. He draws this conclusion at the beginning of number 6. Yes?

**Reader:** "It is then in *this* sphere of the law of contract—"

**LS:** [Inaudible] what we call obligations.

---

<sup>x</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 4. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 675.

<sup>xi</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

**Reader:** “of obligations that we find . . . and continuously saturated with blood.”<sup>xii</sup>

**LS:** Yes, and so he develops at great length the element of cruelty, which is discernible according to Nietzsche even in Kant’s categorical imperative, and of course in many other fine things. The will to power in its crudest form must be the starting point, according to Nietzsche’s general view. Now what [inaudible]. The creditor, as it were, gets a right to [inaudible] for his dividends, as it were, in terms of the debtor’s pain. The enjoyment derived from torturing the insolvent debtor [inaudible] the insolvent creditor [inaudible] that is the satisfaction which the creditor gets. This cruelty of course is, as is made clear, without a sense of shame—I mean, without any hypocrisy. It is a sign of health, as he states in number seven. In this connection, Nietzsche begins to speak of the gods. In the middle of number seven, he says, “What makes one indignant against suffering.” Do you have that?

**Reader:** Yes, page 682, a quarter down. “What really raises one’s indignation against suffering . . . an interesting and painful spectacle.”<sup>xiii</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. That is a hard question, why men invent gods. The answer to that is surely not obvious. Should one not have to understand early men, not by trying to go back to the hypothetical cause why they invented God, but to the fact that they *did* believe in gods and take them, the gods, as an ingredient of all their notions of right and good? That I think seems to be the more reasonable procedure. But let us go on. Number 8, beginning.

**Reader:** “The feeling of ‘ought’—”

**LS:** No, of guilt.

**Reader:** “of ‘guilt,’ of personal obligation . . . creditor and owner—”<sup>xiv</sup>

**LS:** Is this not strange? Is there no [inaudible] what about the other relations between [inaudible]. Is it not a strange assertion that the oldest and most original relation among persons is that of creditor and debtor? Well, one [inaudible] Nietzsche might conceivably say that the relation, say, between parents and children do not belong to that because the children are simply a part of their parents and treated as such. But surely the relations between brothers would be different. It’s very hard [inaudible] this seems to be a kind of obsession with Nietzsche and we do not yet see how we can understand that. In the same aphorism in the middle, “Buying and selling.”

**Reader:** “together with their psychological concomitants . . . and most elementary of the social complexes—”<sup>xv</sup>

---

<sup>xii</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 6. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 678.

<sup>xiii</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 7. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 682.

<sup>xiv</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 8. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 684.

<sup>xv</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 8. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 684.

**LS:** In other words, do we have to imagine men in the Hobbean or Rousseauan state of nature, completely without any social bonds whatever, and then beginning to exchange what? Acorns? It's very hard to understand. Or do you have an explanation, Mr. [student]?

**Student:** Well, the only one that occurred to me was that if men were completely and really alone, then trade might be the first kind of relation that they would have with one another.

**LS:** Yes, but can't one also ask that, since they don't know each other, why do they trust each other? Then Hobbes would come in with his unbeatable argument—you know what I mean by that. So then Nietzsche's explanation doesn't make sense. Let us see whether we will find the solution a bit later. At the beginning of number nine he makes a casual remark which we must observe. Yes?

**Reader:** "Measured always by the standard of antiquity this antiquity—"

**LS:** Not "antiquity," *Vorzeit* is much earlier than antiquity.

**Student:** Prehistory.

**LS:** Yes, one could almost say that, although it is not quite the word. That would be *Vorgeschichte* in German. But it is [inaudible]. Let us say, with Machiavelli, "the most ancient antiquity." Let's just think of classical antiquity.

**Reader:** "Measured always by the standard of the most ancient antiquity (this antiquity, moreover, is present or again possible at all periods)—"<sup>xvi</sup>

**LS:** In other words this can [inaudible] there is no simple progress, as this has been overcome once and for all. It is always still in us and can become actual again. Now let us see and [inaudible] in number ten. Yes, then he speaks of the [inaudible] how this punishment [inaudible] the creditor-debtor relation is transferred to the society—the group, let us say, in its relation to the individuals composing the group. Then that means, to begin with of course, that the poor, insolvent debtor will be punished with the most extreme severity. This severity will decrease with the increase in the power of the commonwealth. At the end [inaudible] the end process would be what seems to have been reached now. Towards the end of number ten, "A power-consciousness of society is not unthinkable."

**Reader:** "of a society blessed with so great a *consciousness* . . . I am strong enough for it."

**LS:** A present-day American practice. Yes?

---

<sup>xvi</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 9. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 685.

**Reader:** “The justice which began with the maxim . . . by *destroying itself*.”<sup>xvii</sup>

**LS:** But the expression in German is *sich selbst aufhebend*, the Hegelian version. The self does not merely destroy, it is also self-elevating, both [inaudible].

**Student:** Transcending one?

**LS:** Transcending itself, or overcoming itself, and of course also destroying itself. Now number eleven. It is a kind of [?semi]<sup>xviii</sup> interlude, but a very important one. Let us read [inaudible] and this gives us the key for the whole preceding argument. Let us read the first sentence.

**Reader:** “A deprecatory word here against the attempts . . . on that of *resentment*.”<sup>xix</sup>

**LS:** Yes, and then he refers to a then-well known German socialist or communist and at the same time anti-Semite, as Nietzsche calls him: Dühring.<sup>xx</sup> That’s uninteresting here. The key point is that the origin of justice, according to Nietzsche, is not revenge. What is Nietzsche’s formula? What is the original formula of justice, according to Nietzsche? In number eight, towards the end, he says, “everything has its price, everything can be compensated,” which is repeated also in the passage we just read at the end of number ten. The origin of justice is the notion that there is a monetary compensation for everything. From here we may be able to understand what Nietzsche means with his emphasis on this economic element. The reduction of justice to exchange is meant to counteract the reduction of justice to revenge and resentment. In other words, such a cool and totally revenge- or resentment-free relation, that between the two exchangers, is suggested for this very reason in order to deny this place of honor to resentment. Yes?

**Student:** Do you think Nietzsche would have read the passage in Exodus, “an eye for an eye” in terms of such exchange and transaction?

**LS:** Provided it is [inaudible]. Yes. You mean not as revenge?

**Student:** Yes, but as [inaudible].

**LS:** That is not clear, because Nietzsche is very much concerned with the fact that the victim, or the family of the victim at least, get a compensation in terms [inaudible] in pleasure for the pain which the criminal inflicted. Therefore, this pleasure consists of course in pain being inflicted in their presence on the criminal—I mean tortures and slow killing of various kinds. He speaks especially about the Germanic procedures, which he finds in their way quite admirable, I mean because they go through the whole process.

---

<sup>xvii</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 10. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 687.

<sup>xviii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xix</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 11. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 689.

<sup>xx</sup> Eugen Dühring (b. 1833), German philosopher and political economist. Friedrich Engels famously inveighed against him in *Anti-Dühring*.

And I think [inaudible]. But the question is: Is this compensation in pleasure for the pain suffered not exactly [inaudible] is this not revenge?

**Student:** Isn't the emphasis even in article eight not on the fact that payment must be made, but that by a limited payment the account can be settled and closed, and that's the end? Thus justice stands [over] against<sup>2</sup> revenge. I think it's historically accurate to say an "eye for an eye," and just *one* eye for an eye, not unlimited malice.

**LS:** In other words you mean that the compensation thought, the exchange thought, has in itself the possibility of a more reasonable or humane development, whereas there is no such development.

**Student:** The emphasis in the compensation is on the finite purchase.

**LS:** That one can say. And it is taken out of this whole dimension of mere reactivity. That is quite true. Now let us read in number eleven, a little bit before the middle. "The active, the aggressive man is always hundred spaces nearer to justice than the—" Begin with the [inaudible].

**Student:** 689, one-third from the bottom. "The active man, the attacking . . . rather in that of the active, strong, spontaneous, aggressive man?"<sup>xxi</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. It's not a question [inaudible] there is no question. As for the origin of right and wrong, let us read also later on this same paragraph: "Hence there is right and wrong only from the establishment of law" Do you have that? In number eleven, about half a page before the end.

**Reader:** "From henceforth the eye becomes trained . . . that is, in its cardinal functions)"<sup>xxii</sup>

**LS:** Although the reasoning is somewhat different, the doctrine itself is a Hobbean doctrine. Prior to the establishment of law, there cannot be right and wrong, which in Hobbes needs some qualifications and probably in Nietzsche's argument too. By nature there cannot be a prohibition against the desire to have more, *pleonexia* in Greek, because life is itself *pleonexia*. Glaucon states this in the Second Book of the *Republic*, as does Callicles. We know this older discussion. Now, in number twelve he returns to the question of the origin and purpose of punishment, and he says that the question of the origin of punishment and of its purpose are totally different considerations. And he gives this [inaudible]. Read this beginning, up to the point of [inaudible].

**Reader:** "A word more on the origin and end . . . are *toto caelo* opposed to each other—"<sup>xxiii</sup>

<sup>xxi</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 11. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 689.

<sup>xxii</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 11. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 691.

<sup>xxiii</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 12. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 692.

**LS:** In other words, no conclusion whatever can be drawn from, say, the present purpose of an institution to its origin. We can be certain or almost certain that the origin, the efficient cause, will have nothing whatever to do with its present cause. He says this also on the next page, where he reminds us of this old story, in the formula of Voltaire. “The eye has been made for the sake of seeing.” Voltaire ridicules this and says the eyes have been made so that we can have eyeglasses; because, anatomically speaking, having eyes is obviously the condition for having eyeglasses. This is rejected with the whole teleology. Later on this [inaudible]. “The development of a ‘thing,’ of a custom, of an organ, is nothing less than its *progressus* towards a goal . . . .” What has happened? Nietzsche gives here an explanation, which is of some importance. We can perhaps read that. Begin there, [with] “The greatness of a ‘progress’.”<sup>3</sup> The key point which he makes here is that there is nothing rational in that process, “The greatness of a.”

**Reader:** “of a ‘progress’ is gauged . . . that *would be* a progress.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

**LS:** This is only opposed to the then accepted notion of progress. But the following is important.

**Reader:** “I emphasize all the more . . . throughout all phenomena.”

**LS:** In other words, Nietzsche agrees with the prevailing mechanism. To that extent both are anti-teleological. But on this basis they differ radically, as he will make quite clear in the sequel. Yes?

**Reader:** “The democratic idiosyncrasy against . . . a mere capacity for ‘reacting’—”

**LS:** “A mere reactivity.” Yes?

**Reader:** “in fact, life itself has been defined . . . adaptation to external circumstances.”<sup>xxv</sup>

**LS:** You must not forget where Nietzsche used the word “reactive”: in the connection between that and resentment, of course. The resenting man is the reactive man. In other words, behind the façade of [? the seemingly]<sup>xxvi</sup> most objective sciences, biology and psychology, a certain moral taste asserts itself and gives itself the appearance of the truth, with which only a savage or obscurantist can possibly disagree. He then comes to a subject of very great practical interest, but we don’t have the time to go into it. In number thirteen, he discusses the purpose of punishment today; we cannot speak any more of the purpose of punishment today because there are no purposes which are asserted with more or less the same right. Modern man is no longer [able] to give an account for punishment as punishment. Of course, there is the protection of society, but then that is no longer punishment. This [inaudible] we cannot go into that.

---

<sup>xxiv</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 12. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 694.

<sup>xxv</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 12. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 694.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

He comes back to a theoretically much more important question in number fourteen: namely, he denies that there is one purpose of punishment, one alleged purpose. That it is reasonable. This alleged purpose is the production of bad conscience. I suppose that it is now rather generally admitted that penitentiaries are not the breeding places, the best breeding places at any rate, for a bad conscience. One reason which he gives [inaudible] this is surely worth considering. In the second half of number 14, “Let us not underestimate especially how far the criminal.”

**Reader:** “In particular, let us not underestimate . . . in a particular context and application.”

**LS:** Yes, well one can of course say that one must consider the context, otherwise one arrives at the old conclusion that there is no difference between the thief and the guard. You remember this example from the First Book of the *Republic*? Men have to have the same qualities in order to be a first-rate thief and a first-rate detective. But [inaudible]. Now, in number 15, Nietzsche refers to Spinoza; he says that Spinoza had acquired the ability to look at all these things, like punishment and bad conscience, from a point of view beyond good and evil, and this is true. One can say that. Yes?

**Student:** [Inaudible]

**LS:** Well, Spinoza looked at things from a point of view beyond good and evil. Nietzsche gives here the most important evidence of that, I mean the first point which he makes, that Spinoza denies that God does everything from the point of view of the good—that is in the appendix to the first part of the *Ethics*, [which] Nietzsche doesn’t mention<sup>4</sup>. But the other quotation is correct.

Now, then, in number sixteen he suggests his hypothesis on the origin of the bad conscience. The presupposition seems again to be that man was originally pre-social. This does not become quite clear here. When they were forced into society, then their instincts could no longer work outward, but turned inward. Therefore the cruelty, which originally was turned toward other human beings, was turned toward oneself. That cruelty turned toward oneself is the origin of the bad conscience, according to Nietzsche. There is in the middle of this number sixteen, “All instincts” (do you have that?) “which are not discharged.”

**Reader:** “All instincts which do not find a vent without . . . this is the origin of the ‘bad conscience.’”<sup>xxvii</sup>

**LS:** Yes. The most important remark here is about, of course, what the soul originally was and what it became. The crucial implication: the soul has no unchangeable being. You remember that from the beginning of that chapter on religion in *Beyond Good and Evil*, where this thought was expressed but not as powerfully as it is here. The soul, the

---

<sup>xxvii</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay 16. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 702.



consciousness, has a long process of genesis, and traditional philosophy—that is Nietzsche's point—takes these phenomena as unchangeable and therefore misunderstands them radically. At the end of number 16, "Let us add at once."

**Reader:** "that this fact of an animal ego . . . produced in the world—"

**LS:** No, that is not well translated, *Tierseele*. The general word, *Tier*, means brute or beast. Yes?

**Reader:** "of a brute ego turning against itself . . . a nonsensical and unheeded performance—"

**LS:** So here Nietzsche as it were takes the side of the pre-Copernican or the pre-modern astronomers. The earth must somehow be the center because there is no being comparable to man. Yes?

**Reader:** "Henceforth man is to be counted . . . in the game of the 'big baby' of Heraclitus—"

**LS:** No, the "big child."

**Reader:** "whether he be called Zeus or Chance— . . . a bridge, a great promise."<sup>xxviii</sup>

**LS:** One can perhaps state this thought as follows. Teleology is finished for Nietzsche and for most of his contemporaries, but there must be something *like* a natural [teleology], if one wants to do justice to man. This is indicated by the reference to Heraclitus.

In number 17, it becomes clear that the men in whom the bad conscience emerged were not simply pre-social. They were pre-political, and of course that would force one to reconsider the whole thing, because as soon as you have society you have some mores (or however you call them) and therefore at least the possibility of deviation and hence of guilt. They were pre-political and they were forced into something like a state by the blond beasts. That was a point made very clear by Mr. [student]. The men in whom the bad conscience emerged were the subjects of the blond beasts. This is described by Nietzsche with very vivid colors: bad conscience, that means self-denial, self-mistreatment, cruelty directed against oneself. Then he brings up again in number 19 the debtor-creditor relation, but now with the interesting development which it has had insofar as present men regard themselves as the debtors of their ancestors. This of course would seem to be rather the interpretation given by the early aristocracies than by the subjects. The others have no reason to be grateful to their ancestors. This leads to the genesis of gods, according to Nietzsche's suggestion here, because [inaudible]. So originally the ancestor becomes transformed (or "transfigured," as Nietzsche says) necessarily into a god. Perhaps this is the origin of the gods. He leaves this question open.

---

<sup>xxviii</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 16. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 703.

Now then, a transition from the gods in general to what Nietzsche calls “the maximal god,” meaning the Biblical God mediated, say, by the universal gods corresponding to empires as distinguished from isolated tribes. The Christian god is the maximal god and therefore produces the maximum of guilt feelings (number 20), from which Nietzsche draws the [inaudible] and the doctrine of original sin is for him this maximum of guilt feeling. From this, he draws the conclusion that if belief in the Biblical god is replaced by atheism, a new innocence, a second innocence—namely, freedom from these guilt feelings, will emerge. We could perhaps read number 22.

**Reader:** “The reader will already have conjectured what took place on the stage and *behind the scenes* of this drama.”

**LS:** Number 22.

**Reader:** Yes.

**LS:** One will perhaps have divined.

**Reader:** Yes. “One will have perhaps already divined what took place on the stage . . . so as to carry his martyrdom to the—”

**LS:** One shouldn’t translate that as “hypothesis” but as presupposition, because Nietzsche calls a hypothesis [*Hypothese*] in German, as in English. So presupposition is not quite the same thing as hypothesis. The key point is that the religious presupposition does not stem from the bad conscience, but wherever it stems from it is connected, or rather it is exploited by the man of the bad conscience for his purposes. The origin of the religious presupposition is left open. Yes?

**Reader:** “Owing something to *God* . . . as infinity of punishment and guilt.”<sup>xxix</sup>

**LS:** He speaks a little bit later of the notion of the “holy God,” in quotation marks. The point is that the “holy God,” the God of the Bible, is one special understanding of God, in contradistinction to the Greek gods in particular, of which he speaks in the next number. The Greek gods are not “holy” gods. It is a long question to what extent there is any notion of holy gods outside of the Bible. There is something in the [inaudible] texts, I believe, but it is not quite clear, not certain; I asked someone who knows these things. Surely the Bible, the holiness of these [inaudible]. Well, very simply, for the Greeks the temple is holy, or anything belonging to the gods is holy, but the gods themselves are not holy. But in the Bible, God himself is holy. One can say that is a peculiarity of the Bible. Nietzsche has seen this quite clearly.

Now what is the practical conclusion, just corresponding to the conclusion at the end of the first treatise? The bad conscience was hitherto used for casting aspersion on men’s

---

<sup>xxix</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 22. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 711-12.

nature and his natural inclinations, for the disparagement of nature. Why not use the bad conscience now against this asceticism? Why not [inaudible]? If you want to be guilty, as it were, why do you not feel guilty for your feelings of guilt? Then you would become natural man again. Let us read the end of number 24.

**Reader:** “Is this even feasible today? . . . the *redeemer* of great love and scorn—”

**LS:** No, “the redeeming man,” he says.

**Reader:** “the redeeming man of great love and scorn . . . the *redemption* of this reality—”

**LS:** But redemption no longer means here what it means in the religious tradition, of course.

**Reader:** “its redemption from the curse . . . *he must one day come.*”<sup>xxx</sup>

**LS:** Well, we know already that there is no such necessity according to Nietzsche himself, but that’s only an expression of the strength of his desire. The end of the first treatise resembles very much this end here. It becomes quite clear that the title, *Genealogy of Morals*, is misleading. Nietzsche is much more concerned with the future than with the past or the origin. Only because a history of morality and its crucial ingredients can liberate one from the present prejudices and therefore make one’s mind free for higher potentialities—only for this reason is the genealogy of morals necessary. Is there any point you would like to bring up? What does your smile mean?

**Student:** Just smiling.

**LS:** I see. Yes, Miss [student]?

**Student:** I was wondering about this last part, where he says we’ll make the world free once more. In what sense does he mean “once more”?

**LS:** At the end?

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Well, there was a time prior to the emergence of the bad conscience.

**Student:** But doesn’t he mean this in a higher sense?

**LS:** Yes, yes.

**Student:** A responsible freedom?

---

<sup>xxx</sup> *Genealogy*, Second Essay, 24. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 716.

**LS:** Yes, surely. But without this bad conscience, in the radical sense in which he understands [inaudible]. You only have to compare it with what he says in number 23 in order [inaudible] namely, what he says about the Greek gods as distinguished from the biblical God. The biblical God, the Christian God, takes punishment on himself, but the Greek gods, according to Nietzsche's assertion at any rate, took on themselves not merely the punishment but the guilt. This enormous heritage of "guilt feelings," as they say now, is incompatible with the freedom of the will. This should be recovered. In the meantime, what Nietzsche demanded has become a rather gruesome reality. I mean the fight against guilt feelings. This was mediated surely by Freud and his school more than by anyone else. Yes, Mr. [student]?

**Student:** Why is Nietzsche himself, unequal to the task he sets for the future?

**LS:** He gives the reason.

**Student:** Well is that sufficient?

**LS:** Why should it not be? You mean . . . [inaudible] . . . there must be a younger man, a stronger one, Zarathustra. Why is this not a sufficient reason?

**Student:** Well, I don't see that [inaudible]. It seems to beg the question of the intrinsic possibility of what he desired.

**LS:** In other words, you mean that this last paragraph is the qualification—that "he must come [one day]"—at the end of the preceding paragraph [number 24]? Yes, one can say that. Yes?

**Student:** [Largely inaudible question about the origin of society.]

**LS:** Well, a simple return is impossible, but there must be a kind of self-destruction and therefore self-overcoming of these things. Consider the final formula of Nietzsche for the superman: "Caesar with the soul of Christ." There you see that he thought of a return to, say, classical Greece as actually impossible.

**Student:** I think you didn't detect the premise of the last question but one, which is that if you are not essentially capable of the job yourself, you cannot with any assurance lay down the specifications of the job.

**LS:** Sure, but the irony is of course also more visible, because who is Zarathustra but the creation of Nietzsche? To that extent it is obviously ironic.

Good. Well, we will meet again on Thursday, and we'll have a paper on the first half of the third treatise, "What is the Significance of Ascetic Ideals?" This is probably the most lively part of *The Genealogy of Morals*, which doesn't mean that the first two parts were not lively.

[end of session]

---

<sup>1</sup> Deleted “which he will discuss here.

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “with.”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “no.”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “that.”

## Session 15: no date

**Leo Strauss:** Your paper<sup>i</sup> is a living proof of the wisdom of my schematic rule: type your paper. Then it is much easier to follow, provided it is read at a reasonable pace and so on. You called the third treatise of *The Genealogy of Morals* “rather lively.” Why the “rather”? Do you know any other writer who, in any country at any time, wrote on subjects of this nature with so much liveliness? I don’t. I don’t claim to have read everything but I never [inaudible] and as far as I can see Nietzsche is unrivaled in this respect. I mean this quality which I believe we find more in the nineteenth century than in any other: brilliance. Who wrote as brilliantly as Nietzsche, and especially on such subjects? For example, in his way, Macaulay is a very brilliant English writer, but Macaulay always remains much closer to political questions even in his critical writing, in his [inaudible]. So let us say that this is an amazingly lively piece which does not [inaudible]. Of course, the question is whether this is the criterion for the best philosophic style. That is a question. Good.

There is one point which you made that to begin with is defensible: namely, you said that the aphorism, which is explained in the third treatise, is a quotation from *Zarathustra* and is a “motto.” I don’t believe that this is what Nietzsche means. I think he means by that aphorism number one, when he says what the significance of ascetic ideals is. Then he says in the case of artists this and that, in the case of philosophers that and that, in the case of women that and that and so on, and finally, in the case of saints that and that. Then he makes a general statement about the significance of the ascetic ideal for man and reaches the conclusion that man needs a goal and that he would rather will the nothing than not will. That is the aphorism. Then Nietzsche says, “Has one understood me? ‘*Not at all, my sir!*’—Well, let us begin from the beginning.” Then comes the [inaudible]. I think that is more plausible. Pardon?

**Student:** Much, much more.

**LS:** No, because the motto [inaudible]. Well, the question is: Is this an aphorism—is a motto an aphorism? But this is not [inaudible]. It was very good of you to consider that, but I believe the solution here is simpler. Now let us turn to the text. You raised a question toward the end of your paper as to the connection between this treatise and the two preceding ones. “What is the Significance of Ascetic Ideals?”—is that the way they translate the title?

**Student:** “What is the Meaning of Ascetic Ideals.”

**LS:** Well, “significance” might be a bit closer to the German and also better after the great use and misuse of the word “meaning” in recent decades. Now, what is the connection between this treatise and the two preceding ones? First of all, what is the

---

<sup>i</sup> Strauss responds to a student’s paper, read at the start of the session. The reading was not recorded.

connection between the two first treatises? You recall the first treatise, the explanation of the good/evil distinction, and the second, the explanation of the bad conscience and guilt. We have seen that what underlies this concern is the concern with the restoration of the natural. The good/bad distinction is natural to a higher degree than the good/evil distinction. The absence of the bad conscience, of that [inaudible] and the satisfaction with the world as it is, is also more natural. But there is this difficulty. Is not nature the same as the will to power? And is therefore the will to power not effective in all moralities, in the good/bad morality as well as in the good/evil morality? In the non-ascetic moralities as well as the ascetic ones? So Nietzsche makes a distinction. He distinguishes between the natural man, in the sense of the healthy man and the moribund or degenerate, weak man. In other words, “natural” retains or regains the normative element which it had from the very beginning when people spoke of the good life as the life according to nature.

Psychologically, the difference is this. The first type, the healthy type, is active, aggressive, yes-saying. The other is a reactive type, rooted in resentment and which says “no” before it says “yes”—namely, “no” to the first type. So the mere fact that the question underlying the first two treatises is the natural life and the restoration of the natural makes it intelligible that there should be a discussion of the ascetic ideal, which is generally taken to be an anti-natural ideal.

The fact that this treatise, the third one, is opened with this summary, with this unintelligible summary, and which becomes intelligible only through the treatise itself [inaudible] here Nietzsche, by making the distinction between artists, philosophers, women, and priests, and so on, implies that this ascetic ideal is much more complex, much more ambiguous than, say, good/evil, bad conscience, and guilt. This will become clear very soon from the sequel.

He begins with the ascetic ideal in the case of artists. Why? Because in the case of artists ascetic ideal means nothing or too many things. In other words, it is least revealing. He takes the example of Richard Wagner, for reasons which are not merely biographic (Nietzsche had been a friend of Wagner); but we have seen in *Beyond Good and Evil*, in chapter 8, the importance which Wagner had as a man who was so revealing of Europe at that time, according to Nietzsche. Here he takes care of one possible misunderstanding about Wagner. The praise of chastity, he says, is not necessarily ascetic, for there is no necessary opposition between chastity and sensuality. He refers to phenomena which are quite well known. He goes even further and says that even if there is a conflict between chastity and sensuality, as to some extent in Goethe and in Hafiz, even in that case this is not necessarily a tragic opposition but a kind of stimulation to life. Only in the case of the—what does he call them toward the end of number 2?

**Student:** “The ruined swine.”

**LS:** Yes. There it is indeed most unpleasant, but we don’t have to talk about that. So, <sup>1</sup>to repeat, <sup>2</sup>[a high regard for] <sup>3</sup>chastity does not prove asceticism because it can go together [with it] for the reason given. The trouble is with Wagner, who changed his posture

toward the ascetic ideal in general, not merely chastity. This is indicated by the fact that in his early period he planned an opera, *Luther's Wedding*, which he did not write, and instead he wrote toward the end of his life the *Parsifal*, which is ascetic not only regarding sex but in every respect. Nietzsche refers here to the fact that the young Wagner was a pupil, as it were, of Feuerbach (who was also the teacher of Marx, by the way) and Feuerbach [inaudible] the term “healthy sensuality” came up in the thirties or forties in Germany, and Wagner then turned away from this this-worldly movement toward a Romantically understood Medieval Catholicism.

The main point which he tries to make in number 4, where we come to a somewhat deeper stratum, is this. If we try to understand what it means that Wagner at the end of his career preached the ascetic ideal, what does this mean? What light does this throw on the soul of Wagner? And then Nietzsche simply says that the conclusion drawn from the work of art to the artist is not valid. He may express what is uppermost in him—what exists, as it were, fully in him. But he may also express what he completely lacks, what he only longs for. Therefore the conclusion is [?not valid]<sup>ii</sup>. He makes here some very extreme statements. He says that the artist [inaudible] says about all artists universally in number 4, “*If the artist were that he could not possibly present it, imagine it, express it: Homer would not have.*”

**Reader:** “created Achilles—”

**LS:** “created Achilles,” yes.

**Reader:** “nor Goethe Faust, if Homer had been an Achilles or Goethe a Faust.”

**LS:** Yes. In other words these are ideals of the poets, to which they know they themselves do not live up. Go on.

**Reader:** “A complete and perfect artist is . . . to have real *existence*.”<sup>iii</sup>

**LS:** To be real. This view of the artist, which is of course not [inaudible] that is said by Nietzsche rather occasionally and is not the sole word on it. It became very popular through the work of Thomas Mann; I believe I have referred to that before. For example, in the *Death in Venice* that is clearly present. In *Tristan* too, the artist always has a longing; also in *Royal Highness*, where the hero doesn't happen to be an artist but he happens to be a German princeling. Fundamentally it is still the same problem of the artist, as one can see with little difficulty. This is one of the many suggestions which Nietzsche makes and which are based on the observation of a certain kind of artist whom Nietzsche calls sometimes romantic artist, in contradistinction to the classic artist. Now let us go on. Read the beginning of number 5.

---

<sup>ii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by original transcriber.

<sup>iii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 4. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 722.



**Reader:** “What, then, is the meaning of ascetic ideals? . . . not taken up a sufficiently independent—”

**LS:** Oh no, he has misunderstood the German idiomatic expression *lange nicht*; he has understood it temporally. They are so [inaudible] *Die Herren Künstler*, how do you say it in English?

**Student:** “Our good artists.”

**LS:** No, *Messieurs les artistes*. What would you say in English? Is there a way of expressing it in English?

**Student:** Our friends the artists?

**LS:** That is a bit [different]. All right, apparently it is not possible. They are “much too little independent in the world and against the world.”

**Reader:** “by a long shot—”

**LS:** Yes. That is much clearer. This brings out the meaning of the German idiomatic expression.

**Reader:** “by a long shot insufficiently independent . . . quite apart from the fact—”<sup>iv</sup>

**LS:** And so on. This we can dismiss because that is not [inaudible] and there were also the slaves of the audiences, the box offices and what have you. That is uninteresting. The interesting thing is that whether they are uncorrupted by success or the hope for success or not, they were the valets of a morality or philosophy or religion. Have you ever heard that? Where have you heard that?

**Student:** In *Republic* 10.

**LS:** Yes, but here only as the valets of a morality, of a *nomos*. One can say that that’s indeed true. And yes, we will have to think of Plato more than once. In a parallel passage, if I remember well, in *Gay Science*, aphorism 1, he says there have been at all times valets of a morality, and admits here that there are valets of a philosophy or of a religion. Of course, every religious poet can be said in nasty language to be a “valet” of his religion. There were quite a few poets who were: for example, Lucretius was a valet of the philosophy of Epicurus. You can make similar remarks regarding other famous poets. Therefore, to come back to the case of Wagner, which is here immediately under discussion, Wagner was simply [inaudible] became an ascetic poet be [inaudible] or composer because he [inaudible] was the valet of Schopenhauer, as he had been a valet of Feuerbach in his earlier musical work. Therefore there is nothing peculiar to Wagner about that. This was due not merely to Schopenhauer’s greatness in general but to a

---

<sup>iv</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 5. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 723.

particular fact: namely, Schopenhauer's aesthetics is characterized by the fact that he regards music as the most metaphysical of all arts. And let us read this [inaudible] toward the end.

**Reader:** "He suddenly realized that *more* could be effected . . . the language of the will itself—"

**LS:** The "will itself" is, according to Schopenhauer, the thing in itself, *the* truth. Yes?

**Reader:** "the will itself, speaking straight out of . . . the *musician* himself was held—"

**LS:** Naturally. Every musician who understood his situation would [inaudible] yes, yes.

**Reader:** "he became now an oracle, a priest, nay, more than a priest, a kind of mouthpiece for the 'intrinsic essence of things'—"

**LS:** No, no, for the 'thing in itself.

**Reader:** "for the 'thing in itself' . . . he eventually talked *ascetic ideals!*"<sup>v</sup>

**LS:** So that is it. We have now the answer. Now, therefore, we have done with the artist and the question is: What is the significance of metaphysics? because Nietzsche seems to take it for granted that metaphysics is in itself ascetic or gives the foundation for ascetic ideals. Does this make sense? I mean, don't be profound, look at the surface first. What does metaphysics, literally translated, mean?

**Student:** Beyond the natural things.

**LS:** Yes, you can say it indicates another world. Therefore, naturally, if metaphysics means the assertion of another world, it denies the values of this world. It is ascetic. That will become clear. We remember perhaps the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*, where Nietzsche spoke of Plato's pure mind and the good in itself, which are of course also, literally understood, ascetic.

Now Nietzsche is led to Schopenhauer from Wagner; therefore he begins to speak of Schopenhauer's conception of the aesthetic problem, which is traced by Schopenhauer, and by Nietzsche following him, to Kant's aesthetics. Here he makes a general remark which is very important for Nietzsche's aesthetics: that Kant's aesthetics (as all other aesthetics prior to him, as Nietzsche says) is aesthetics from the *spectator's* point of view, from the recipient's point of view. You remember he attacked the recipient point of view [inaudible]. The much higher consideration is to look at art from the artist's, from the creator's, point of view, and that is what Nietzsche claims he would do in his aesthetics. Here is [inaudible]. What did Kant and Schopenhauer say about what is beautiful?

---

<sup>v</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 5. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 724-25.

**Reader:** “‘That is beautiful,’ says Kant, ‘which pleases without interesting.’”<sup>vi</sup>

**LS:** We can easily [inaudible]. And what is the alternative view to which Nietzsche refers here?

**Student:** “A promise of happiness.”

**LS:** “*Une promesse de bonheur.*” Who said that?

**Student:** Stendhal.

**LS:** Yes. In other words, here in this provisional statement we have to choose between Kant’s disinterested pleasure and Stendhal’s “promise of happiness.” Who in his senses, especially when he or she is young, would not prefer Stendhal to Kant? We cannot go into this question of whether Nietzsche understood Kant’s definition properly. Instead I will suggest one other point which is helpful. The Kantian definition of the beautiful refers not merely to the beautiful we find in art, but to the beautiful in nature: the singing of nightingales or what have you; or a beautiful human body, or a beautiful panther. It refers to all beautiful. The beautiful that aesthetics came to refer to is (with respect to the doctrine of art) to the beautiful in art—or maybe even of the ugly in art, as they said later in the nineteenth century. That is a more recent development. Originally, aesthetics meant “the science of all beautiful,” and therefore primarily of course the naturally beautiful, the beautiful in nature. But in this discussion we cannot go here.

Now the only [inaudible]. Kant’s definition reminds of an older one. I’ll read it to you: “The beautiful is that whose apprehension pleases. But the good is that which pleases,” meaning not merely through apprehension. “The beautiful is that whose *apprehension* pleases.” Apprehension is the decisive thing, and therefore it is not necessarily involved that you try to grab it, because what pleases is not this thing itself, but the apprehension pleases. This is the definition given by Thomas Aquinas,<sup>vii</sup> which probably has an older origin although I don’t know.

As for the alternative view, I’ll read to you something from another writer, from Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapter 6: “The Latin tongue has two words, whose significations approach to those of good and evil; but are not precisely the same; and those are *pulchrum* [LS: beautiful] and *turpe* [LS: base, ugly]. Whereof the former [LS: beautiful] signifies that which by some apparent signs promiseth good; and the later, that which promiseth evil.” Here we have the source of Stendhal. I think we have to point this out in fairness to Hobbes in particular and to the English in general, after what has been done to them by Nietzsche in his gross exaggeration in the chapter on “Nations and Peoples.”

This much [inaudible]. One point which Nietzsche of course saw perfectly is that although the definition of the beautiful may be identical in Kant and Schopenhauer, it

---

<sup>vi</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 6. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 726.

<sup>vii</sup> *Summa Theologica* 1a2ae, 27.1, ad 3

meant something very different in Kant and in Schopenhauer because Kant, as Nietzsche saw him, was a [inaudible] but in a way phenomenally lifeless man. Schopenhauer, on the other hand, was very lively. Kant is not a brilliant writer. He is one of the greatest stylists of the German tongue, but he is not brilliant. He can make jokes here and there which are very fine, but I don't say that they are the best jokes. One [of these] is very nice and very graceful, I believe, when he mentions the old saying that philosophy must be the handmaid of theology and then says that, yes, that one can say, but it all depends on whether she is the maid who carries the train of the mistress or whether she is the maid who carries the candle in front of her. Kant says that. It is only in passing,<sup>viii</sup> whereas Schopenhauer speaks with very great passion of the aesthetic experience. Nietzsche gives some examples. "What almost pathological temporal contrastation between 'that moment'" of aesthetic enjoyment, "and the other 'wheel of Ixion.'" I'm sorry, do you have it?

**Reader:** [In the] middle of 727. "How almost pathological is that temporal antithesis . . . 'the vile pressure of the will.'"

**LS:** These are Schopenhauerian expressions. He speaks of that. Yes?

**Reader:** "But granted that Schopenhauer . . . he wishes to *escape from a torture*."<sup>ix</sup>

**LS:** Yes, now you see Nietzsche makes here a grave step. Hitherto he had spoken only of Schopenhauer, or maybe Kant, but now he generalizes by asking what it means in the case of a philosopher to pay homage to the ascetic ideal. He wants to escape from a torture. This torture will not be in other cases the same as in the case of Schopenhauer, who as you know was concerned with overcoming the torture of sex and other things which Nietzsche had mentioned before. What is that from which all philosophers prior to Nietzsche tried to be free? What was the torture common to all of them?

**Student:** Ignorance?

**LS:** No. That is what they said, but Nietzsche questioned that.

**Student:** The "wheel of change": coming into being and passing away.

**LS:** Yes, yes exactly. Philosophy was the quest for the eternal. It was an attempt therefore to escape from becoming and passing away, that which Nietzsche interpreted in *Zarathustra* as the spirit of revenge. To that extent [inaudible]. Schopenhauer is indeed a representative of the philosophers.

---

<sup>viii</sup> *Conflict of the Faculties (Streit der Fakultäten)*, trans. M. J. Gregor (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 45.

<sup>ix</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 6. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 727-28.

**Student:** Is this the being void of purpose that he talks about? Is this becoming and passing away similar to the being void of purpose that he talks about in the introductory section?

**LS:** Is that the same? I understood the first question. Is becoming and passing away the same as . . . ?

**Student:** Being void of purpose.

**LS:** No. After all, in a wholly purposeless world there could be coming into being and passing away. But take the simplest example, the Platonic idea, which is beyond all coming into being and passing away. That is for Nietzsche *the* classic form of philosophy: the pure mind, free from sensuality, free from all emotion (to say nothing of time), perceives the eternally unchangeable ideas. If you replace the ideas by the laws of nature in the sense of Newton, let us say, the situation is not fundamentally changed. Even in present day science, which is no longer Newtonian, even there there is still some pure knowledge of what is, and everything else we disregard. So this is then [inaudible]. Therefore the ascetic ideal is of the essence of philosophy. This is a point which Nietzsche does not emphasize in the sequel because he is concerned with something more elementary in philosophy and something which will be characteristic of the philosophers of the future, who will be philosophers of becoming as well. Therefore let us turn to the next paragraph. Begin.

**Reader:** “Let us beware of making dismal faces . . . his *remedium* against disgust, his *happiness*.”

**LS:** I suppose you all have met such people. Go on.

**Reader:** “So much with regard to what is most personal in the case of Schopenhauer—”

**LS:** Now we are through with Schopenhauer. Now we come to the interesting [inaudible].

**Reader:** “on the other hand . . . there should be no illusions on this score.”<sup>x</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. We are at the key assertion. There is an essential connection between philosophy in every form (hence including the philosophy of the future) and the ascetic ideal. The philosophers are as such ascetic. Of course Nietzsche isn’t speaking of professors of philosophy; he speaks of the great philosophers. The reason he gives in the sequel, explicitly towards the end, is that they seek and need independence. They look for the optimal conditions of independence, as every other beast. As Nietzsche says: Look, think of the dog who finds with absolute exactness the right point between the fireplace and the door where it is not too hot and not too cold, the perfect medium. In the same way every other animal, in particular the philosopher animal, has an instinct for the

---

<sup>x</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 7. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 728-29.

optimal conditions, and these are his asceticism. Therefore the famous three vows—chastity, poverty, and humility—are fulfilled by the philosophers as such. He speaks here in particular of marriage, and raises this question of which great philosopher hitherto has been married.

**Reader:** “Heraclitus, Plato, Descartes . . . just to prove this very rule.”<sup>xi</sup>

**LS:** Well of course he omits Hegel, and whom else?

**Student:** Aristotle.

**LS:** Was he married? He had a son. He probably was married. [Laughter, which drowns out Strauss’s words.] Hobbes, of course, also was unmarried. Locke was unmarried. But they wouldn’t count, because of their ethnic troubles [because they were English], so there is something to that. One couldn’t state it more amusingly than Nietzsche did. The key point which Nietzsche makes here, however, already here and more in the sequel is that [inaudible] in number 8 when he says “poverty, humility, chastity; and now look.”

**Reader:** “just look closely at the life of all . . . their *finest* fruitfulness.

**LS:** Stop here. That is very clear. In other words, the sympathy of the philosophers for the ascetic ideal has nothing whatever to do with morality. He indicates that here by using the word “virtues.” It is simply the condition of philosophizing, and there is nothing [inaudible] if the philosophers were proud, they might be proud of their philosophizing but not of the conditions of the philosophizing. If you remember the passages in Books 5 and 6 of the *Republic* about the conditions of the philosopher there, you will recall that all the moral virtues—Plato doesn’t use the term “moral virtues,” but what we or Aristotle would call moral virtues come in here as indispensable conditions for philosophy. In other words, the other things<sup>xii</sup> make life unnecessarily complicated. If you are unjust—to take it in the crudest sense, if you break the law—consider what kind of annoyance may very well come from the [inaudible]. A crude reason for being lawabiding. Or consider intemperance: well, you will be punished for that, not by law courts but by nature itself. Or cowardice: you will live in constant fear, you cannot think, and so on and so on. Nietzsche illustrates this a bit more in the sequel. Let us see, when he compares, toward the end . . . .

**Reader:** ““He who possesses is possessed.””

**LS:** Yes, but begin at “They demand very little.”

**Reader:** “After all, they demand little enough . . . time, strength, love, interest.”<sup>xiii</sup>

---

<sup>xi</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 7. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 729-30.

<sup>xii</sup> i.e., the vices.

<sup>xiii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 8. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 733-34.

**LS:** And so on. Then he comes to speak of chastity.

**Reader:** “In this attitude there is not a trace of chastity—”

**LS:** No, no: What, as regards finally the chastity of philosophers, this kind of mind has its fertility—

**Reader:** “the fruitfulness of this type of mind . . . with still greater boldness—”

**LS:** Immodesty.

**Reader:** “immodesty: ‘Of what use is posterity . . . or a jockey to abstain from women—”  
»xiv

**LS:** Well, I think one couldn’t express more forcefully and more clearly what he means. The ascetic ideal is the non-moral, amoral, or trans-moral condition of the philosophic life. Let us read the beginning of the next paragraph.

**Reader:** “A certain asceticism, a grimly gay . . . and, consequently—”»xv

**LS:** No, not “consequently”: and also. Of that which he had not yet spoken and of which he doesn’t speak but which he mentions only in passing: “Also one of its most natural consequences.” So asceticism in the sense defined is both the condition of the philosophic life and the consequence of the philosophic life, also a great Platonic theme. Plato does not speak of asceticism, of course, but he speaks, for example, of temperance and the other virtues, of why they are essential to the philosopher. The motivation is very different from that of the ordinary temperate man. The ordinary temperate man—or *sōphrōn*, which means a bit more [than a] moderate man—is moderate because it is noble to be moderate. The beauty of virtue has this attraction. That applies to the other virtues. But for the philosopher, that is in a way not necessary because his end (knowledge, wisdom) so obviously demands these kinds of virtues that there is no need to look at the beauty of these virtues—say, of justice. There is an interesting but not quite easy discussion of this question at the end of Aristotle’s *Eudemian Ethics*, which is not the famous *Ethics*, the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The *Eudemian Ethics* is where Aristotle makes the distinction [LS writes on the blackboard] . . . do you say in English, Eudemian?

**Student:** I usually hear “Eudemian.”

**LS:** Okay. The *Eudemian Ethics*, where he makes the distinction between the perfect gentleman—the man who does the noble things because they are noble, and which corresponds to what we mean by moral—and the good man. The good man has nothing to do with nobility. Aristotle gives here the example of the Spartans, who did the prudent, practical, proper things, but for their benefit and not for the nobility of the things. But

---

xiv *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 8. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 734.

xv *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 9. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 735.

then [inaudible] in other words, calculating. Utilitarians versus the gentlemen. Then he discusses the second character, the utilitarian, who is also externally as moral as the gentleman, but his motivation is very different. Aristotle raises the question of whether, if we seek the good things and are only concerned with the good, must we not have an overall goal or end which guides us in our choice of the subordinate good things. Then he answers yes; and this goal is, as he puts it there, the knowledge of god. So here we have the possibility of a purely utilitarian ethics, if I may say so—not in the sense of Bentham, but entirely at the service of the highest theoretical perfection, where the moral consideration proper, which is concerned with nobility or with duty (if you want to use this word), is out. It has no place. It wouldn't do you any harm if you read this occasionally.

Now, to repeat: Nietzsche says here that asceticism is the condition and the consequence of philosophizing. He goes on. There is a still closer bond between philosophy and asceticism. Will you read it?

**Reader:** “A serious historical investigation shows the bond . . . against self-consciousness?”

**LS:** So in other words, philosophy looked at from a pre-philosophic age, from an age where there was not yet philosophy, is [inaudible]<sup>xvi</sup>. Therefore the philosopher concealed this very fact from himself; that's Nietzsche's assertion. Beginning of number 10.

**Reader:** “There is in the same—”

**LS:** No, a little bit later. “The inactive.”

**Reader:** “brooding, unwarlike element in the instincts . . . against ‘the philosophic element in themselves.’”<sup>xvii</sup>

**LS:** Against the philosopher in them. The philosopher, in other words (and this is for Nietzsche in a way more important than what he said before), had to appear to the non-philosophers in a fear-inspiring guise, and that was the guise of the ascetic. It impresses people if someone can go without food for ten days, or—what did this woman from Vietnam call it?—if a man gets himself barbecued, or at least if only partly. And so Nietzsche's point is (and that is a point we would have to consider if this were the place for it) that the philosophers did not make clear to themselves what they did. They were unable to face the situation. They were not above the communal normality, but under its spell. Of course, Nietzsche gives no evidence for his assertion that the philosophers were not fully conscious of the disproportion between philosophy and what we may call the city. One more point in number 10, toward the last fourth. “The peculiarly world-denying” or “life denying”—do you have that?

---

<sup>xvi</sup> In the original transcript: “*hybris* in Kant.”

<sup>xvii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 10. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 739.



**Reader:** “the *ascetic priest* has taken—”

**LS:** Is this still number 10? Here . . . All right, begin.

**Reader:** “The peculiarly etherealized abstraction . . . as the ideal *philosophic attitude*—”

**LS:** No: as the philosophic attitude as such.

**Reader:** “this abstraction is the result of those . . . without an ascetic misunderstanding.”

**LS:** I think I’ll repeat only that this is one of the things which to me at any rate are particularly wrong in Nietzsche. He comes closer to this problem than any nineteenth or twentieth century writer, namely, to the fact that philosophy was a problem for the philosophers and their fellows. But that the philosophers would not have been aware of that, and would not have been free from the values by which they were measured on the part of their fellows, I believe is a demonstrably wrong assertion. Yes?

**Reader:** “Expressed plainly and palpably . . . could live and slink about . . . ”<sup>xviii</sup>

**LS:** That’s enough. In other words, we know now the philosophers are not ascetics themselves, but that their asceticism is a consequence or a condition of their philosophizing. It is also the guise under which philosophy presented itself originally in order to become possible, because it has all notions of decency against it, as Nietzsche made rather clear in a passage which we read. We come then to the ascetic priest. Read the beginning.

**Reader:** “And now, after we have caught sight . . . ‘What is the meaning of all—’”

**LS:** Who is the real representative of seriousness?

**Student:** The ascetic priest.

**LS:** Yes.

**Reader:** “‘What is the meaning of all seriousness?’ . . . In that ideal—”

**LS:** Well this is a grave remark, by the way; you must not deceive yourself about its importance by the casual character in which it is said. It is clear that one cannot speak of seriousness if there is not something other than seriousness, which one can call “playfulness.” Can the two things exist separately from each other? I think that according to Nietzsche, no. And according to Plato—what does Plato say about it? No. Also [inaudible] they are not the most famous, perhaps, who said that. And so [inaudible] but in the case of the priests it would seem that it is possible to have the one without the other. Yes: “The ascetic priest has in that ideal not only his faith.”

---

<sup>xviii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 10. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 740.

**Reader:** “but also his will, his power, his interest.”<sup>xix</sup>

**LS:** That distinguishes them from everybody else hitherto discussed and also from everybody else not discussed. Who was not discussed? Women, because their asceticism is not comparable to that of the ascetic priest. That is implied. Now read two or three sentences later. “The thought about which the struggle is going on here is the evaluation of our life on the part of the ascetic priest.” Yes?

**Reader:** “We shall therefore—” I see, yes. “The idea, which is the subject of this dispute . . . nay *must*, refute by action—”

**LS:** You notice that “nature” and “world” are supplied with quotation marks, and “the whole sphere of becoming and perishability” is not. Well, that there is a whole world [inaudible] sphere of becoming and perishability is not questioned. We only have to look around us. But whether there is such a thing as “nature” in any strict sense has become a question in Nietzsche. What is the precise problem? Read a little bit later—there, when he states the point that the ascetic ideal exists everywhere, so to speak: “It must be a necessity of the first order which always makes again grow and prosper this species, inimical to life.”

**Reader:** “must be a necessity of the first order . . . such a type of self-contradiction.”

**LS:** “Self-contradiction” because life by itself affirms itself, tries to continue to preserve itself. But a life turning against life is a living self-contradiction. Yes?

**Reader:** “For an ascetic life is a self-contradiction . . . to dam the sources of power—”<sup>xx</sup>

**LS:** And so on, and so on. We cannot unfortunately read the [inaudible]. The ascetic ideal, which we find in its clear and pure form in the ascetic priest, originates in the fundamental need of the very life which is denied by the ascetic ideal, for obviously there is no other life in which it could originate. This is excluded by Nietzsche; hence the paradox that it must originate in the only life there is, in this life. Is this clear? I mean that the metaphysical, traditional, transcendentalist (or whatever you call it) interpretation is excluded from the very beginning. What is then this “interest of life”? Asceticism turns against the senses, against reason itself, and against many other things. It is an amazing kind of cruelty. Yet this absurd cruelty is of immense value, in the first place to the human intellect. Let us read toward the end of number 12. “Let us be.”

**Reader:** “forsooth, my philosophic colleagues—”

**LS:** No, no. Here.

---

<sup>xix</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 11. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 741.

<sup>xx</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 11. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 742-43.

**Reader:** Oh, above. “After all, let us, in our character of knowers . . . for its eternal ‘Objectivity’—”

**LS:** No, not “eternal:” for its future “Objectivity.”

**Reader:** “objectivity being understood not as . . . and to switch them on and off—”<sup>xxi</sup>

**LS:** You remember what he said. One must give one’s mind dangerous freedom, and for this reason one must indeed control one’s heart. You remember that? This freedom and the possibility to look at things from an entirely different, from a radically different, perspective has become possible through the emergence of the ascetic ideal. This is of course generally true. The rejected morality—good/evil, the bad conscience, guilt and asceticism—makes possible a much higher form of the praised morality: the aristocratic morality, the morality without bad conscience, the non-ascetic morality. Therefore, however terrible the ascetic ideal in itself may be, its effects are an essential ingredient for any higher future of man.

In the next paragraph, number 13, Nietzsche explains the ascetic ideal and what it means in terms of life: “*the ascetic ideal stems.*”

**Reader:** “*the prophylactic and self-preservative instincts . . . is a dodge for the preservation of life.*”<sup>xxii</sup>

**LS:** Namely, provided we remind ourselves of the distinction between a healthy and a diseased life. It is a *kind* of cure for the diseased life. He will make clear what this means. Unfortunately we cannot read the whole thing. At any rate what he says already here is that the ascetic priest gives meaning to the life of the degenerates, and that is his great function. Therefore he makes them satisfied with their lot; otherwise they would be in a state of hopeless rebellion. So they become pleased with their lot. Now we will make a big jump to number 14, about a page or so before the end, after he has referred to Dühring.

**Reader:** “They are all men of resentment”?

**LS:** Yes, when he speaks of certain people like the anti-Jewish agitators, and all kinds of other people as well.

**Reader:** “They are all men of resentment . . . *there is too much misery!*”<sup>xxiii</sup>

**LS:** In other words,<sup>4</sup> that the resentment-filled men make the happy people ashamed of their happiness. That is the worse thing which can happen, as he

---

<sup>xxi</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 12. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 744.

<sup>xxii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 13. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 745-46.

<sup>xxiii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 14. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 750.

makes [inaudible] because it means that the higher should be dominated or in the service of the lower, which is against nature. Yes?

**Student:** He seems therefore to say that we shouldn't let these people come to a consciousness of the higher people. But how does this work with his setting up psychology as that highest of disciplines, which is evidently [inaudible].

**LS:** This is not written for those people. These people should read books of popular edification, in which they are told to despise these happy ones who are in for eternal damnation; then they are horribly pleased with themselves. The happy ones are pleased with themselves, but on better grounds. Resentment thus becomes harmless through the reinterpretation of their feelings, which is offered to them by the ascetic priest.

**Student:** The higher ones, though, perhaps should study psychology. This means that the lower ones necessarily come to their consciousness, doesn't it?

**LS:** Well, there is another [inaudible] but they won't study psychology; they will be guided by people who tell them that psychology, in Nietzsche's sense, is poison.

**Student:** These are the higher people?

**LS:** No, the morbid people, in Nietzsche's sense.

**Student:** What about the higher people?

**LS:** They will simply live in a different world—to grossly exaggerate, but to which I am compelled by your question, they live in their slave-pens.

**Student:** The lower people.

**LS:** Yes. The others live in beautiful houses. They don't meet with the lower anywhere. Well, there must be some intermediaries, like non-commissioned officers, so to speak, or bailiffs or however you might call them; that also is necessary. But I thought you meant another question: How can Nietzsche's recipe ever function after he has stated it in this way? I mean, there would be no longer any takers for this kind of dubious medicine. Then they would simply say that that's opiate for us, as someone else said, and wouldn't believe it. Is this difficulty not also to be considered?

**Student:** My question is, granted the higher people live in their beautiful houses but study psychology in their beautiful houses, inevitably they'll learn about the lower people. Will this or won't this corrupt them?

**LS:** No, on the contrary. They will no longer have false pity. That is what [?he means].<sup>xxiv</sup> If I may use this gross and coarse metaphor or simile: hitherto, the men in the

---

<sup>xxiv</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

good houses, the clean houses, have a bad conscience for living there. That is what Nietzsche wants to [inaudible] you have not the slightest reason for that. This problem has now reached popular discussion in this country; you must have read that. I mean that [inaudible] the guilt feelings, and also the consequences of that. Nietzsche anticipated it without having an inkling of the problems in this country (and especially the problems in 1967), yet he has seen the root of the problem. For example, when he wrote that a morality of compassion, if it is taken seriously and it is not mere hypocrisy, means that our most important duty is to be concerned with the suffering, which means [inaudible] with those who are physically, psychically, or mentally defective. Is it not so [these days]? Because the others don't need our help. Then Nietzsche says that this is a wrong understanding of human life. After all, to be healthy in body, soul, and mind while doing the works belonging to that health is good, and these people should in no way be discouraged from doing that. That is—and you can state it in a style closer to what columnists would say—that is what [inaudible] means.

This is a point which must be heard. Needless to say, it never was so grave because in practice the true capacity for compassion among human beings is very, very small. The talk, on the other hand, is immense. If one is hit by it and, say, sees a terrible scene of torture or other misery, of course one is impressed. But we are very clever in forgetting it or putting it back again. So there is no danger that men can ever become too compassionate. If Nietzsche feared that, he had an unfounded fear. But still the “official” ideal—“official” to the extent that a man of the reputation of Schopenhauer and then also Richard Wagner made themselves the apostles of compassion, and quite a few other people too—of course affected and confused at least [some] people's thinking. Nietzsche opposes that.

**Student:** Did Nietzsche influence German thinking in terms of [his] objection to the morality of compassion?

**LS:** In Germany the situation was different. In Germany (as Nietzsche makes quite clear, I think), the men in control were the Prussian Junkers, a class of men not overly given to soft feelings. They [inaudible] the army and [?buy]<sup>xxv</sup> their own commissioned officers, an important part of every army because they are the transmitters from the feudal stratum to the sub-feudal stratum. So in Germany there was no great fear that this [inaudible] from a practical point of view. But of course in Nietzsche this whole thing is part of a much larger problem because compassion [appears]<sup>5</sup> in Nietzsche, too. After all he is not (how shall I say?) the ideologist of drill sergeants. He had very little use for that. Yes?

**Student:** It seemed like there was a lot of German [inaudible] of the glorification of the [inaudible].

**LS:** Oh, there is no doubt that the popular effect of Nietzsche has very much to do with the Nazis; there's no doubt about that. Here is where the question of responsibility comes

---

<sup>xxv</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

in. Surely it would be simple apologetics, or whatever you call it, to deny that. But that is not the whole story.

Now there are two more papers due today. Since they don't seem to be here I will condemn the two sinners to hand in next time papers on the last section, paragraphs 15 to the end of the third treatise, because we could not discuss the fifteenth paragraph, a paragraph which is important. I will take it up next time. It might be good if you all were to read it.

[end of session]

---

<sup>1</sup> Deleted "the ascetic ideal."

<sup>2</sup> Deleted "the place."

<sup>3</sup> Deleted "of."

<sup>4</sup> Deleted "that happiness primarily."

<sup>5</sup> Deleted "comes in."

## Session 16: no date

**Leo Strauss:** That was a good paper.<sup>i</sup> There are a few points I would like to raise. You referred to the difficulty regarding Nietzsche's starting point in his hypothesis or construction of man's history. And you seemed to suggest that there is [inaudible] the earliest stage is one which is pre-social.

**Student:** In the earliest stage, the earliest that I can find Nietzsche mentioning, there is a large amorphous mass of pre-social men. There are also some stronger men, who are bound together, and who are in a social condition.

**LS:** But if we make the construction clear, would these strong men be visible as a group at the earliest stage?

**Student:** No.

**LS:** In other words, Nietzsche assumes in a way this notion of a beginning with isolated individuals—something we know so well from Hobbes, but one doesn't have to go back to Hobbes. Nietzsche didn't know Hobbes very well, as we have seen. Lucretius, the famous Latin Epicurean poet, starts also from such a construction: early isolated men, and members of the two sexes mating haphazardly and procreating without the male staying with the female. Or, do you know this?

**Student:** I don't know.

**LS:** Otherwise, there would already be something like a family and no longer [inaudible]. I think it is true that Nietzsche still accepts this kind of account [?from]<sup>ii</sup> the beginning. I believe today there is no one who would say [one]<sup>1</sup> an ever come back to a man in a presocial state. There will always be herds of some sort, which we must start from.

There is another point of Nietzsche, which is extremely topical and accepted today via psychoanalysis. This must have become visible to you from Mr. [student's] paper—assuming that you hadn't read Nietzsche himself, how much of what is now known chiefly through psychoanalysis goes back to Nietzsche, especially regarding guilt feelings. But what is the difference between psychoanalysis, at least in the way in which it is ordinarily understood, and Nietzsche? I mean Freudian psychoanalysis; there are other schools, but less powerful. Yes?

**Student:** Nietzsche looks for a reason behind the [guilt?]<sup>iii</sup>.

---

<sup>i</sup> Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the start of the session. The reading was not recorded.

<sup>ii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>iii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

**LS:** But still, in the crude thesis, guilt is just a human addition; it is not a part of the fact. It is an interpretation, and in many respects an unsalutary interpretation in the decisive respect. Well, the question of course presupposes in both cases a notion of human health. The question is: What does Freud understand by human health and what does Nietzsche understand by it?

**Student:** Freud understands the last man.

**LS:** Yes, the adjusted individual who has become a cog, a working cog in the big social machine. Nietzsche would have said that a man torn by guilt feelings, however irrational, is a much better man than this mere cog. Yes?

**Student:** How much of that thought is [?fair to]<sup>iv</sup> Freud?

**LS:** Not to Freud himself, perhaps, but to quite a few who stem from him. Another point which was very powerful, and of which we have seen the source here, is this. The common view in Nietzsche's time (and to some extent even in our time) was that modernity—starting, say, with the seventeenth century or Renaissance—means this-worldly questioning or rejecting of the other world in order to establish the kingdom of God or heaven on *earth*. Consider, for example, the emergence of such a science of salvation like political economy instead of theology. This is, I think, a characteristic thing, which we can see even in university organizations both in this country and in Europe. In the older time there was always a theological faculty, whereas in modern times we find universities which have a social science and, in particular, an economics faculty but not a theological one. That's an old, old story.

Nietzsche questions that. He says there was of course an opposition between, say, modern rationalism and the theological tradition. But this modern rationalism is, if you look at it more closely, much more indebted to the theological tradition than appears at first sight. In his formula, the ascetic ideal is effective in modern science itself. On a more narrow plane this has become very popular through Max Weber's famous treatise on the origin of the capitalist spirit. What's the exact title?

**Student:** *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

**LS:** Yes, thank you. There, this this-worldly science of economics, of the wealth of nations, was traced by a very complicated process (which Weber never succeeded in making clear) to Puritan morality. I believe the doctrine of Weber is untenable, but it had an enormous influence up to the [inaudible] and I think it belongs today to the social science teachings which are regarded as solidly proven and on which we can build. Stated in more popular terms: modern morality in all its forms, which includes of course the morality of science, is secularized biblical morality. That is a very common belief today—though of course, as all beliefs, it must be examined and studied. But surely

---

<sup>iv</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.



Nietzsche stated it much more powerfully than anybody else. Now what was the problem solved by the ascetic ideal, Mr. [student]?

**Student:** It gave a meaning to man's life; it gave him a goal.

**LS:** To man's life in general, but to something in life in particular; something which goes together with life but is not [inaudible].

**Student:** Suffering.

**LS:** Suffering. And in which way did the ascetic life give meaning to suffering? What was the key invention of the ascetic priest?

**Student:** Guilt, which [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, but [inaudible]. Here you have a suffering fellow: what does it tell him?

**Student:** It tells him, "you are suffering because you have sinned."

**LS:** "You deserved it."

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** That's the key point. Nietzsche goes then on to say, taking a view of the whole, that the ascetic ideal, which includes of course a belief in God and a just God, is the only ideal hitherto. Do you remember that section in *Zarathustra*, "Of Thousand and One Goal"? Mankind hitherto does not yet have a goal, which was of course [?an]<sup>v</sup> elliptical statement. Nietzsche and Zarathustra knew that there was a goal, but it was not a valuable goal; therefore, what Nietzsche is looking for is a goal of mankind which is not the ascetic goal and which is opposed to the ascetic goal but in a way, as we have seen in discussing the earlier parts, which integrates certain acquisitions due to the ascetic Biblical morality.<sup>2</sup>

Let us turn to our readings. There is one point which I forgot to make and of which I was quite surprised retrospectively that no one of you reminded me. Was there no one there who had the Catholic education [inaudible]? You were not there. I noticed this. Now, when Nietzsche speaks of the three vows of the ascetic men which are also the vows of the philosopher, in aphorism 8, he speaks of poverty, chastity, and humility. Pardon?

**Student:** He changed humility from obedience.

**LS:** Exactly. And why did he do [inaudible]? Yes, it is really a disgrace that I didn't observe that. What is the meaning of the change? The philosopher is poor, he is chaste

---

<sup>v</sup> Material in brackets inserted by original transcriber.

(for the reasons given by Nietzsche), and he is humble in the sense defined by Nietzsche. He avoids all loud things. But why is he not obedient?

**Student:** He can be humble because he realizes his ignorance, but he may not be obedient because there is no other human being, or as a matter of fact anything [inaudible].

**LS:** He could not possibly obey because he would have to [inaudible]. It's traditionally said he would have to have reasons for why he should do this and that. But if he does this for these reasons known to him, even if he has learned them from somebody else, he does not obey. Is this not clear? Obedience presupposes a recognition of authority, but the philosopher doesn't recognize this. So that is [inaudible]. You see, one has to be very careful; there are all kinds of traps there. This, incidentally, would explain the motto of treatise 3, which was understood also by some of the papers as the aphorism introducing the third treatise, contrary to what I think is the true [inaudible]. Read that.

**Reader:** “Careless, mocking, forceful—so does wisdom wish us: she is a woman, and never loves any one but a warrior.”<sup>vi</sup>

**LS:** Whether that is compatible with humility is another matter, but it is surely not compatible with obedience. It is compatible with humility as defined by Nietzsche, which has very little to do with humility in the traditional sense. There is one more point I would like to make. Nietzsche begins his discussion of the ascetic priest with the assertion that the ascetic ideal originates in a fundamental need of the very life which that ideal denies. The ascetic ideal denies this life by the mere fact that it asserts another life. That alone is sufficient. Whether there is a relative recognition of this life is ultimately important, because in the light of the other life this life loses its ultimate importance. That is, I believe, Nietzsche's point. Now we have read [inaudible]. Did we read last time aphorism 15?

**Student:** No.

**LS:** No. Well, it is of course [inaudible] we have very much to read. Now Nietzsche begins here to raise the question of what is the need for the ascetic priest or [?it's/? his]<sup>vii</sup> function. That he states at the beginning. Well, there is a need for physicians and male nurses, because there are so many men who are sick in body and/or soul. These physicians must themselves be sick, otherwise how could they understand their patients? But now this is all right: this is a healthy function, that the sick should be treated by the sick. The trouble is that in order to fulfill this function, the ascetic priest must weaken and poison the healthy, because his view that all misfortune is deserved because of human sins will also cast a blight on the happy ones, on the privileged ones. This he develops at some length in number 15. Yes, and here the point [inaudible] he also makes clear that of course what the ascetic priest does is not to cure the sick, because they remain as sick as they were but their sickness is being given another direction. Instead of merely suffering,

---

<sup>vi</sup> *The Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 717.

<sup>vii</sup> Material in brackets supplied by original transcriber.

dumbly suffering, their suffering has suddenly become meaning[ful]: Oh, I got what I deserved; I must repent, and the whole reasoning following from that. Nietzsche has, within the limits of his criticism of course, a very high regard for what the ascetic priest does. Let us read in number 16, the third sentence or so, “a kind of bringing together and organization” I think it must [inaudible].

**Reader:** “On the one hand, a kind of congestion and organization of the sick (the word “Church” is the most popular name for it); on the other, a kind of provisional safeguarding of the comparatively healthy, the more perfect specimens, the cleavage of a *rift* between healthy and sick—for a long time that was all! and it was *very* much!”

**LS:** Go on.

**Reader:** “I am proceeding, as you see, in this essay . . . which is no longer binding upon us.”<sup>viii</sup>

**LS:** Yes. He spoke earlier of the absolute in an earlier passage in number 7 of this treatise, of the absolute necessity to interpret the facts. A fact as fact is dumb, as Nietzsche puts it, and it reveals meaning only by virtue of interpretation. But as we see from this remark here, certain interpretations are “no longer valid” (“no longer” is also in quotes), are no longer obligatory, compelling. This is the moral-religious interpretation, according to Nietzsche. Later on, a few lines later, he speaks of the religious interpretation as [inaudible] and that presupposition [inaudible] or to express this proposition in an enlarged form.

**Reader:** “I do not for a minute accept the very “pain in the soul” as a real fact, but only as an explanation . . . as yet absolutely in the air and devoid of scientific cogency—”<sup>ix</sup>

**LS:** The word is the same as before: *unverbindlich*. *Wissenschaft ist unverbindlich* and “the other” has nothing *verbindlich* any more. The religious interpretation is no longer necessary, obligatory, compulsory. But now only those interpretations have this authority which are scientific, because science is now the authority. And of course for Nietzsche, as we know, the scientific interpretation, superficially stated, is a physiological interpretation in terms of health and sickness; one could therefore say that it is a materialistic interpretation. But let us read the very last sentence of this aphorism.

**Reader:** “If he fails to relieve—”

**LS:** No, the very last sentence of this aphorism.

**Reader:** “You can adopt such a theory, and yet *entre nous* be nevertheless the strongest opponent of all materialism.”<sup>x</sup>

---

<sup>viii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 16. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 756.

<sup>ix</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 16. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 756.

<sup>x</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 16. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 757.

**LS:** In other words, while Nietzsche wishes to give physiological interpretations, which we take with many grains of salt—but let us leave it at that; Nietzsche is not a materialist. How is this possible? What is a materialist? Say, Thomas Hobbes. But [inaudible] and the French materialists of the eighteenth century and quite a few in the nineteenth. Yes?

**Student:** Those people said that the only things which exist are objects or bodies.

**LS:** That is what Nietzsche in a way also says. We have read the passage in the *Zarathustra* when he said that the self is the body.

**Student:** Well, but it's also [inaudible] the spirit. The body is also an interpretation of something which is somehow a combination of both body and [inaudible] what used to be understood as both body and soul.

**LS:** More simply, materialism reduces the living to the lifeless, [to] biochemistry, biophysics, whereas Nietzsche asserts that whatever is, in any interesting sense of the word, is living. Therefore physiology as Nietzsche understood it is not materialist. This only in passing. Now you had something to say.

**Student:** Mr. [student] read “casual” and our translation is “causal interpretation.”

**LS:** Oh, that happens frequently. I saw in the English translation of some of Max Weber's methodological essays by [inaudible] brought out quite a long time ago. There you read all the time of “casual” instead of “causal.”

**Student:** It was “causal.”

**LS:** I think you would correct it while you go.

**Student:** Would you elaborate on how a physiological explanation can be not material, not materialist?

**LS:** Because it does not reduce the living to the lifeless.

**Student:** What would it reduce the living to then?

**LS:** Life is the ultimate fact. And the lifeless is—how Nietzsche would have put it is hard to say because he didn't elaborate it, but he would perhaps say that the simply lifeless is a kind of relic of the living. I mean, it is very hard to assert that because we know now that these immense celestial bodies are lifeless or almost lifeless, and life has come out of them. That is what science teaches. Nietzsche questions that. Nietzsche holds, for reasons which he has not explicitly stated, that it is impossible to understand the living in terms of the lifeless.

**Student:** What puzzles me is the use of the word “physiological,” I mean did he actually [inaudible]?

**LS:** No, “physiological” is meant in the modern sense of the term as the doctrine of the functions of the body, and is in this respect open to both interpretations: that it must be reduced to biochemical and biophysical processes, or it cannot be so reduced. That’s open.

**Student:** Well, does he do this? Does he explain the fact of the soul in terms of the living body?

**LS:** To some extent, all the time—for example, when he says these things which jar our ears, about how all mixtures of classes, for example, are mixtures of races, you know? That is a physiological thing. A mixture of class as such would be a purely social fact falling within the purview of sociology. But if it is a matter of races, then it is of course a physiological problem.

**Student:** I mean that seems to imply in reality a materialistic [inaudible]; you ask [inaudible].

**LS:** Why, why? Why cannot living beings of [inaudible] and especially living human beings, consist of different races? There is no difficulty. Some are more gifted for this, others more gifted for that, some absolutely more gifted than others. There is no difficulty in that.

**Student:** The question would be what is the source of the distinction of races, and what is [inaudible]?

**LS:** Life. The same life which produced rabbits, lions, snakes, also produced human beings. You learn that in school, I suppose. Why could it not have produced different races of men, either at different times and different places, and so on? That’s not difficult. But this is surely Nietzsche’s basic premise: that materialism is impossible, is untenable. Yes?

**Student:** When [inaudible] the way in which Nietzsche seems to imply that weakness, that inferiority is in a sense in his sense of the word physiological, or that being poor in spirit and so on is something physiological, rather than at times something intellectual, or psychological, that it’s something [inaudible] it’s the way you are constituted . . .

**LS:** Well, but it is not quite as simple as that because of the men of whom he thinks when he speaks of the early aristocracies. You remember that? These are people of course with healthy bodies—fighters—but they also have a healthy mind. They don’t have to repress things in themselves. (Is this the word: repress?) They don’t have to repress things in themselves because they are strong enough to get what they want. Why should they [inaudible]. They don’t have particular resentments, because when they have something [to anger them] they take it out and digest it, as Nietzsche puts it in his

physiological language. So this is [inaudible] one must follow Nietzsche's ambiguity here if one wants to understand that. The other question is whether it is a sensible doctrine. That is [inaudible] we must [inaudible].

Now let us go on in number 17, not far from the beginning. He says: "For generally speaking, with all great religions the main concern was to fight a certain tiredness and—<sup>xi</sup>

**Reader:** "and heaviness that has infected everything."<sup>xii</sup>

**LS:** "that has become an epidemic," period. "In all great religions." What about Greek religion, Greek pagan religion?

**Student:** He considered that inferior, certain[ly] to the Jewish religion. I don't know [inaudible].

**LS:** Still, on the basis of our very sentence, it is not a great religion. The great religions are those which have either in themselves or through their descendants a universal appeal, an appeal much like Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and so on. The ascetic priest, Nietzsche goes on to say in this aphorism, finds the feeling of pain, of disgust, and all these other feelings, without recognizing their physiological roots. In other words, he treats only symptoms. But this has great [inaudible] nevertheless is useful within limits, as Nietzsche tries to make clear.

Nietzsche [inaudible] the ascetic priest and that to which he appeals, both within himself and in speaking to others, is of course religion. What Nietzsche would have to do, and what he in a way does in "What is the Significance of Ascetic Ideals?" and in the whole *Genealogy of Morals*, is of course not to understand these things to which the ascetic priest appeals in the manner in which the ascetic priest himself understands them. Is this clear? The priest speaks, to use more reasoned language, of religious experience. Nietzsche simply denies that there are religious experiences, period. Is this [inaudible] by the way, in a much cruder way in Freud, as you when you read you see that *ce n'existe pas*.

But of course it is incumbent on Nietzsche to give an explanation, and a good explanation, of religious phenomena on the basis of his atheism. This itself would require first of all that the phenomena as they present themselves to the ascetic priest and his followers be taken seriously. How can you explain X if you do not know X? It's impossible because then you may have a beautiful theory which explains Y but which does not explain X. So what we need and would need, in the first place, would be what has been called since a phenomenology of the religious experience. In a way that was done by William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience* and

---

<sup>xi</sup> Apparently Strauss's translation.

<sup>xii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 17, *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 758.

by [inaudible] perhaps better by Rudolph Otto in his book *The Holy*.<sup>xiii</sup> That is a large field of study altogether. This we do not find this in any satisfactory way in Nietzsche.

Let us see, there was one point which [inaudible]. Naturally, the fundamental point would be this as far as this religious experience is concerned with the experience of gods as such. Nietzsche has given some hints of how he understands the genesis of these feelings, but he has not made sufficiently clear whether he is fair to what these experiences themselves contain. In other words, it is not enough to explain what he does in number 17 more or less by explaining the psychological states of Christian or other mystics; one would also have to understand in the first place the experience of God or gods in general. This is something which Nietzsche surely does not do.

He develops then this point about what the ascetic priest does, and the salvation that is his promise, as it were; he compares that with the condition of deep sleep. He doesn't mean the first awareness of being saved, which would be a highly exciting experience, but that toward which the believer looks forward. That is a point we have discussed in a section of the *Zarathustra*, "On the Teachers of Virtue," where he reduces the whole of traditional morality to a teaching of sleeping, or ruminating. Now let us read the end of number 17. "Nevertheless we should also in the case here, just as in the case of salvation, remember."

**Reader:** "we will take care to realize (as we did when discussing "redemption" . . . nothingness is in all pessimistic religions called God)."<sup>xiv</sup>

**LS:** In other words, Nietzsche knows that the pessimistic religions themselves are mistaken. They speak of God and the mystics, and the founders surely claimed to have experienced God. And Nietzsche simply says, No, you have experienced nothing—or nothingness; it is hard to translate it. In German they would be the same word. Of course, again we have to take the document seriously and see whether this interpretation makes sense. Nietzsche assumes that. He is an atheist for other reasons, not on account of his analysis of the religions. For Nietzsche, God is nothingness because life, earthly life, is everything. The amazing thing is that, while Nietzsche speaks in such powerful language about life with its glories and dangers (the dangers being required for [?his glory]<sup>xv</sup>), Nietzsche has very little to say about death, without which life would not be possible, whereas the experience of death was very highly regarded in the Christian tradition. Spinoza, a precursor of Nietzsche in many ways, opposed the *meditatio vitae*, the meditation of life, to the Christian *meditatio mortis*, the meditation of death.<sup>xvi</sup> The meditation of death is also absent from Nietzsche, but is not death an indispensable ingredient of human life? That question has very great consequences regarding Nietzsche's analysis.

---

<sup>xiii</sup> Rudolf Otto (b. 1869), Lutheran German theologian. His popular and influential *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und seine Verhältnis zum Rationalen* (*The Holy: On the Rational in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*) appeared in 1917.

<sup>xiv</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 17. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 762.

<sup>xv</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xvi</sup> Cf. *Ethics* 4.67

Nietzsche develops in the sequel some more “nostrums,” as Mr. [student] called them, which form part of the cabinet of the ascetic priest. For example, the small good deeds. Well, you know the great hypocrisy which can easily conceal itself under this heading. As Nietzsche rightly says, if someone helps another human being and regards this as an important thing, if he does it as it were without knowing what he does—in other words, [he] sees a poor fellow and helps him—that would not be regarded as a good deed but simply something which goes without saying. But if any emphasis is put on it, it might very well have its reason in the pleasant feeling of superiority which the helper has compared with the man in need of help. All these observations here are of interest because this seamy side of the love of neighbor and the other things doubtless exist, but one could rightly say Nietzsche doesn’t prove that this is the essence of this phenomenon. Because there might be [inaudible]. Let it be true in 99 percent of the cases; if it is untrue in one percent, then this one percent is the interesting example on which you would concentrate—to say nothing of the fact that revealed religion has always been opposed to the seamy side, this misuse of the religious feelings or execution [of good deeds].

Hitherto, up to number 18, Nietzsche has spoken of what he calls the harmless or innocent devices of the ascetic priest. Now he turns to those which are not as innocent. In other words, if a fellow who is underprivileged by nature and society suffers from his nothingness and is being given a sense of importance by doing some good deed, by being directed toward some good deed, that’s harmless. On the contrary, he feels better and he is a nicer man to that extent—although not for the reason he believes, but only because he is reminded of his superiority. But there are the not innocent nostrums. He prefaces this discussion in number 19 with a remark on the dishonesty of modern man, meaning of course late nineteenth-century man. Unfortunately we cannot read that, but I think if you read it you will see that things have changed to some extent in this respect. There has been a victory of what is vulgarly called cynicism, which has had an effect in all strata of society, in all age groups, in all sexes. Whether that is in every respect appropriate, that there is less of hypocrisy in the world and more shamelessness, that is a long question where Nietzsche, I believe, would, if he could still see it, say that the Victorian age was not as bad as he presented it. But this only in passing.

In number 20, what is that non-innocent part of the medication used by the ascetic priest? This is the consequence of his use of the feeling of guilt, of the feeling of sin. Now let us see. Read from about the middle of that paragraph. “The main trick which the ascetic priest permitted himself.” Do you have that, in about the middle of paragraph 20?

**Reader:** “‘Sin’—for that is the name of the new priestly version of the animal ‘bad-conscience’ (the inverted cruelty)—has up to the present been the greatest event in the history of the diseased soul; in ‘sin’ we find the most perilous and fatal masterpiece of religious interpretation. Imagine man, suffering—”

**LS:** It is in about the middle.



**Reader:** “The keynote by which the ascetic priest was enabled to get every kind of agonizing and ecstatic music to play on the fibres of the human soul—was, as every one knows. The exploitation of the feeling of “*guilt*.” . . . in its crude state, as it were.”<sup>xvii</sup>

**LS:** In other words, these fellows who were [inaudible] found themselves for the first time in a cage (you remember?) and tried, after having been subjected to the rule of the [?jailers]<sup>xviii</sup>, that was [inaudible] but this is only a very poor early stage. The key thing is done by the priests. Yes?

**Reader:** “It was first in the hands of the priest . . . masterpiece of religious interpretation.”<sup>xix</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. The achievement of the ascetic priests is this: to make suffering meaningful. That means of course to make life meaningful, because life is to a considerable extent, as the younger among you may know, suffering. There were such strong arguments by the enemies of religion in earlier centuries that such a God who created hell could not have been a good God. I suppose thousands of volumes have been written on this and related themes. But the most terrible things in hell give human life an infinite importance. This act of murder or whatever else it might be—some beast kills another beast on this planet—who cares about this? No, there *is* someone who cares. It is of [inaudible] infinite punishments, so important is it whether we do good or ill.

Contrast that with the worldview of modern science: man is the accidental or contingent product of blind forces. Life has no meaning. The great deed of the ascetic priest, as Nietzsche says in a somewhat euphemistic expression, was that he gave “meaning” to human life. But Nietzsche points out in the sequel, in number 21, that the ascetic priest in doing so has made man still more sick than he originally was, precisely because he treated only the symptoms and not the incurable disease itself. If someone is by nature and society underprivileged, this malady cannot be cured. I mean you can [inaudible] except by self-deception, or in this much more successful way, by saying, No, it is better to suffer in both respects, because quite a few temptations (the temptation to pride, for example) would not arise in this case.

**Student:** In the way he is describing what the ascetic priest is doing, would the biblical prophet be more or less a social reformer, more so than the priest?

**LS:** But were the biblical prophets social reformers?

**Student:** Well, they seemed to go after the root of the problem more so than the symptom.

---

<sup>xvii</sup> *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, 20. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 769.

<sup>xviii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xix</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 20. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 769.

**LS:** But in the first place, he does not speak here of the Old Testament prophets (though he will speak of them somewhat later), but surely they were not social reformers. The utmost one could say is that they regarded (how shall I say?) the exploitation of widows, orphans, strangers, and the poor, as something more important to be avoided than hecatombs of sacrifices. Are they social reformers? If you look at them in the light of nineteenth/twentieth century thought then they are of course social reformers, but did they suggest a single new law for the protection of the poor and the widows and orphans? That would be a social reform. Did they call up the poor, the widows, and orphans to rise and fight [inaudible]? Nothing of this kind. They regarded in a way [inaudible] that is nothing [inaudible] just as in Athens, as you see from Pericles' Funeral Oration, what is particularly bad is if someone is vicious to people who can't help themselves. This far [inaudible]. But of course Pericles is the opposite of a prophet; he only says that in Athens this is a source of reproof, that it is bad manners to do that. The prophet says that it is much worse than just bad manners; he says that it is a terrible crime against God himself. That is not [a] social reformer, under no circumstances. That is an impermissible assertion, which does not mean that it is not a very popular assertion. Yes?

**Student:** Would you call them critics instead? Are you trying to say that they were social critics?

**LS:** In a way [inaudible] exactly, that social critic belongs together with what I said before. Why not call things by their simple name? There are these men who are most likely to be maltreated by the rich and powerful and healthy, and therefore they are under a special protection by a just God. And the prophets remind these cows of [inaudible], or however they call them, of their elementary duties which [inaudible].

**Student:** I was wondering if you could elaborate a little bit more on what the nature of the incurable disease is?

**LS:** The incurable [inaudible] if someone is, say, ugly, sick, poor, stupid. There are such people.

**Student:** Just bad luck or [inaudible].

**LS:** Well, it's not bad luck—I mean, that is his nature. It goes much deeper than [?bad luck].<sup>xx</sup> If someone is rich or poor, that may be good or bad luck, especially in a mobile society. But these things are gifts or defects of nature. Now what should he do? If he [inaudible] of course some people are healthy and say, I have these and these defects and I must live with them, and succeed quite well. But there are others who can't stand that situation and they say, I, too, want to be . . . [a contender] (that version is taken from American films<sup>xxi</sup>)—"I, too, want to be important." Have you ever heard that? Some

---

<sup>xx</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xxixi</sup> Strauss may be referring to the well-known line spoken by Marlon Brando's character, Terry Malloy, in *On the Waterfront* (1954): "I could have been a contender."

people go then so far as to kill their own parents because they suffer so much from their defects.

If we start from these crude and well-known things, if it were possible to find someone, not a city official [or] psychoanalyst, but someone with much greater authority like the ascetic priest who would tell this man that his life [inaudible] he is important, to use this phrase—not only in spite of but *because* of these defects, because through them he is protected against such vices as pride, and so on and so on—then that would be [inaudible] would make him better. Then he would feel important, exactly as Nietzsche says. What we have today are these people who want to be important and there is no ghost of a chance they will be because [inaudible]. Of course there is one: If being important means to have your picture on the front page of a daily paper, then this fellow who presumably murdered seven nurses was much more successful than most of us will ever be, as you know. Start from that and try to see then whether there is not another way. Now psychoanalysis of course has also the great disadvantage that it is, I understand, very expensive, and this is inexpensive, the ascetic priest. Now I don't say [inaudible].

These are so elementary things that they are not mentioned by Nietzsche, but I believe we have to take them into consideration if we wish to understand the whole phenomenon. The more interesting case is of course what the ascetic priest did to men of another caliber. To mention Nietzsche's favorite example: What did he do to men like Pascal, a mind of the first order? In number 22 Nietzsche then speaks of the bad effect of the ascetic priest on taste, and here he has some severe remarks about the New Testament as distinguished from the Old. Unfortunately we cannot read everything; let us only read the end of number 22.

**Reader:** "The ascetic ideal, you will guess . . . it is itself a '*non plus ultra*.'"<sup>xxii</sup>

**LS:** You have to hold this together with what Nietzsche says earlier in *Beyond Good and Evil* about the measurelessness of the modern mind, in number 224. We cannot read that now, but the [comparison]<sup>3</sup> is important. In other words, as he concludes at the beginning of number 23, "the ascetic ideal has corrupted not only health and taste, it has also corrupted a third, fourth, fifth, sixth."

**Reader:** "I shall take care not to go through the catalogue (when should I get to the end?)."<sup>xxiii</sup>

**LS:** And so on. Nevertheless, in spite of the very deleterious effect of the ascetic ideal, it had one good effect: it gave the human race a single goal, a single goal that is connected with the fact that it is connected with the one God, and His one goal, one end to the human race. We can no longer live (that is here implied) without such a single goal. The great question of whether there is not a single goal in Plato, or Aristotle, or someone else, we cannot even raise. Nietzsche implies there was no such single goal. Surely in one

---

<sup>xxii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 22. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 775.

<sup>xxiii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 23. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 776.

sense it is perfectly true because the single goal, the highest goal, according to Plato and Aristotle, is something like contemplation, which is a preserve of <sup>4</sup>[only some men] and not of all men, whereas the Biblical ideal (if one can speak of that) is universal. There is not yet a counter-ideal, and that is a point which Nietzsche elaborates [?at some length].<sup>xxiv</sup> “Where is the counterpart to this closed system of will, goal, interpretation?”

**Reader:** “Why is the counterpart lacking? Where is the other ‘one aim’?”<sup>xxv</sup>

**LS:** Good, thank you. Now that is [inaudible]. Nietzsche denies that it is. Of course the answer would be [inaudible]. Yes?

**Student:** Well, in several places Nietzsche calls this counter-goal an ideal itself, and I was wondering how you understand Nietzsche himself, who seems to be an enemy of all ideal making, as someone who proposes an ideal.

**LS:** Of all idealism, yes, but not of all ideals, although there are passages, especially in his later writings, *The Dawn of Idols* and others, in which he rejects all ideals. But we have seen more than once that Nietzsche makes statements which are meant to stir up, which are extreme, and which must be considered coolly and therefore [inaudible]. Nietzsche is against ideals in the sense of wishes, that’s clear—something incompatible with human nature. But ideals in the sense of goals leading beyond everything hitherto achieved anywhere: without *that* Nietzsche[’s position] is not [un]thinkable, as we have seen from the *Zarathustra*. The overman is obviously, in crude language, an ideal. But Nietzsche’s point is that he can show the intrinsic possibility, in particular why the overman is intrinsically possible now and necessary now. Well, this is one of the questions we can discuss perhaps next time.

There is no counter-ideal. In other words, the socialist ideal or anything like it is not a counter-ideal. The famous case, the most famous case now, is of course that of Marx: dialectical materialism and the scientific interpretation of history. So what about science, which has fought its long war against religion from the seventeenth century on, as Nietzsche takes for granted? The men of intellectual probity—you remember them from *Zarathustra*? In the *Zarathustra* we have seen this example of the fellow who is a specialist regarding the brain of leeches. And Nietzsche asks: Are these men anti-ascetic? What asceticism is required of the scientist whether in [inaudible] or scholar (the distinction between scientists and scholars is unimportant for Nietzsche) [inaudible].

We must compare this section on the scientists here, number 24 and so on, with what he said about the asceticism of the philosophers in the earlier part of the third treatise of *The Genealogy of Morals*. You remember the philosophers have their chastity, poverty, humility. That does not necessarily mean that they adhere to the ascetic ideal; it only means that they regard an ascetic life as the optimal condition for thinking. It is the means, not the end. But these men of probity, the scientists, are still ascetic; they are still

---

<sup>xxiv</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xxv</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 23. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 777.

believers. Let us read in number 24. Since we will meet on Thursday, we don't have to rush through that, but let us read a few [inaudible] in number 24, "We 'knowers.'"

**Reader:** "have grown by degrees suspicious of all kinds of believers, our suspicion has step by step habituated us to draw just the opposite conclusions to what people have drawn before; that is to say, wherever the strength of a belief is particularly prominent to draw the conclusion of the difficulty of proving what is believed, the conclusion of its actual *improbability*."<sup>xxvi</sup>

**LS:** By the way, a religious man [inaudible] would of course have an easier answer, and would simply say [that] naturally what we believe in is improbable by definition. That is nothing [inaudible] Yes?

**Reader:** "We do not again deny that 'faith produces salvation': *for that very reason* we do deny that faith *proves* anything,—a strong faith, which produces happiness, causes suspicion of the object of that faith, it does not establish its 'truth,' it does establish a certain probability of—*illusion*."<sup>xxvii</sup>

**LS:** And so on. Nietzsche comes then to speak of that which is presupposed in every science and the belief underlying science: namely, the belief in science. However severely the scientist may object to the intrusion of any belief, as distinguished from hypothesis, into his science, his very basis is a belief. We can say [that] Nietzsche's view is as follows: science is unable to give an account of itself. To which one will get the answer today (and not only today, but a very long time since) that there is a science which gives an account of science. That is called epistemology. But does epistemology give an account of *why* science, of the goodness of science? By definition not, because in this case, which God forbid—I am speaking from the point of view of these people—there would be a demonstrable value if you could prove the goodness of science. So that cannot possibly be tolerated; therefore the goodness of science is presupposed by science and science cannot answer the question why it is good.

But Nietzsche goes beyond this. The fundamental belief, he says in the sequel of number 24, is not the belief in science merely, but the belief in the truth. A little bit later, another page or so later: "these not by a long shot free spirits."

**Reader:** "*for they still believe in truth . . . taking leave of the very belief in truth.*"<sup>xxviii</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. In other words, we have to take this last step to question the concern with truth itself, which concern is broader than science because we are concerned with truth also in [inaudible]. He develops this then in the sequel, returning to science again. Science claims to be the highest authority; this is of course unchanged since Nietzsche's time, but perhaps only strengthened, although also in some respects somewhat weakened.

---

<sup>xxvi</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 24. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 779.

<sup>xxvii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 24. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 779.

<sup>xxviii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 24. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 780.

Here Nietzsche makes the point that science in every form presupposes philosophy—whether it knows it or not, whether the presuppositions are laid down now or have been laid down in the seventeenth century, doesn't make any difference. And all philosophy is based on the belief of truth as being, as God.

We will take this up next time. The question is only, What precisely can he mean by saying that we must question the value of truth? Do we not assert the value of truth in the act of questioning its value? For we want to have a true answer to the question. So, but I hope [inaudible] if it is all right with you, we will have a kind of farewell party to the present quarter on Thursday.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Deleted "he."

<sup>2</sup> Deleted "LS: Now there is one practical point. Mr. [student] wondered whether we should not have a kind of final discussion this coming Thursday. Well, I am willing to do that provided there is no blizzard or even a [inaudible] between now and then. Is there any one of you [inaudible]. I mean, well, I am perfectly willing to have this conversation with Mr. [student] alone, but [inaudible]."

**Student:** They promise us better and better weather.

**LS:** Oh, I see, All right. Let us leave it at that. You will be here.

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Good. And Mr. [student] will be here. All right, I will be here at 3:30 on Thursday and then we'll have a meeting without any hardship on anyone: no papers and so on. Good.

[end of session]

<sup>3</sup> Changed from "confrontation."

<sup>4</sup> Deleted "a part of man."

<sup>5</sup> Deleted "So is there no one else here—I will repeat my question from the beginning of class—who has a paper? They will be condemned [inaudible]."

## Session 17: no date

**Leo Strauss:** Only as a matter of curiosity, is there anyone here who has taken this course for credit and has not handed in his or her paper? I see. Everything is really under control. Good.

First we should finish our discussion of the last section of the third [inaudible]. We had read number 24. We will go now to number 25. I remind you only of the subjects which we began to discuss last time. According to Nietzsche, modern this-worldly science is not, as it claims, anti-ascetic, for it believes in or presupposes the value of truth. In order to overcome the ascetic ideal, one must question the value of truth. Well, this is necessary under all conditions, one could say, assuming that one should not take anything for granted. But Nietzsche goes beyond that. We have seen in number 24 that he refers to the assassins whose motto was “nothing is true,” which would mean questioning not merely the value of truth but truth itself: even granted that it would be possible and alright to seek for the truth, there is no truth, which goes much beyond questioning the value of truth. We have to consider that later. I suggest we now turn to aphorism 25 and begin to read. Shortly after the beginning he had said, “These two things, science and the ascetic ideal.”

**Reader:** “both rest on the same basis—I have already made this clear—the basis, I say, of the same over-appreciation of truth . . . its involuntary panegyrist, the *golden nature*.”<sup>i</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here for one moment. So here at least we get some inkling of what Nietzsche means. The questioning of truth and of science goes together with the rising value of art. The formula is clear: Homer versus Plato. Questioning the supremacy of truth means accepting the supremacy of falsehood or [the] deception of art. Now there is a minor difficulty here because we have seen earlier in this treatise, in numbers 4 to 5, a criticism of the artist. You remember that? What did he say there about the poets and the other artists?

**Student:** They can’t stand alone. They always [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes. So here we hear the opposite.

**Student:** Isn’t that slightly contained in saying that Homer was the “involuntary panegyrist”? The problem of the artist is that he hasn’t got a soul that he can call his own.

**LS:** Yes.<sup>1</sup> He doesn’t say the “unconscious” panegyrist; he says the “involuntary.” Then we would have to know what Homer’s intention was. What was that? Nietzsche doesn’t tell us here. We do not have any answer to this question, but this is surely important. If we disregard this for the moment at least, [it is clear that] Homer involuntarily falsified things by embellishing them, magnifying them. That is an old story. It is already what

---

<sup>i</sup> *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, 25. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 783.

Thucydides said against Homer, that he magnified things and therefore [inaudible]. Now but does this [inaudible]. So in other words, the criticism [inaudible]. What we need is not (or not merely) the knowledge of things as they are, but we also need a magnification or embellishment of them. Why is this so? This latter is more important. Under what condition does this make sense?

**Student:** Life itself is meaningless so we have to [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes, yes. In other words, if the quest for truth, for science, leads to the consequence that human life is wholly meaningless, then indeed we have to know that in a way, in order to understand the function of art. Also it makes clear that life without art would reduce man to a lower level than he ever had lived before. There is another point which we have to consider here. In number 24, if you turn back a bit, in about the middle, the center of number 24. “I know all this perhaps all too well.”

**Reader:** “I know all this perhaps too much . . . that dignified philosophic—”

**LS:** No, “that venerable.”

**Reader:** “venerable philosophic abstinence . . . only a *modus* of that repudiation.”<sup>ii</sup>

**LS:** So here we have that. In other words, science as it understands itself would refuse to engage in any interpretations. An interpretation means an enrichment of the data, of the facts, giving them meaning. And this word which he uses here—which was the last word used in the English?

**Reader:** “a *modus* of that repudiation.”

**LS:** No, I mean when he uses many words: “doing violence”?

**Reader:** “falsifying, and all the other *essential* attributes—”

**LS:** Before “falsifying.”

**Reader:** “Inventing.”

**LS:** Well, in German it is *Ausdichten*. *Dichten* is the word for [writing] poetry, and *Ausdichten* is a compound of that. In other words, all interpretation is akin to the poetic activity, and without that there is no meaning. The fundamental knowledge which makes possible all other knowledge—one can also call it the establishment of the framework within which understanding takes place, or what Collingwood calls the absolute presupposition—this is much more akin to art or poetry than to science, because these absolute presuppositions are incapable of being established by argument. Now let us read

---

<sup>ii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 24. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 780-81.



some more in number 25, when he speaks of the victories of science, perhaps half a page later.

**Reader:** “As for these celebrated *victories* of science; . . . *into the ‘thrilling sensation of his own nothingness’?*”<sup>iii</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. So this is a further elucidation of what we read before: Man cannot possibly live on the basis of the truth because the truth reduces human life to meaninglessness, and therefore one must question the supremacy, one must question the value of truth. And that implies [that] one must look out for some other force which would counteract science, and that would be art—not every kind of art, not a morbid art like that of Wagner or a romantic art [ ]<sup>iv</sup>. Nietzsche takes the greatest example, that is Homer. Yes.

Now a few more points. Let us turn to a few passages in number 27. So now I think we all know that from our own observation that compared with the world view presented by modern natural science the traditional religious world view is infinitely more bearable even if it [inaudible]. Now let us see in number 27—we cannot read the whole. Let us . . . after the reference to the book which he prepares, *The Will to Power*.

**Reader:** “The only reason why I come to allude to it here is this: the ascetic ideal has at times, even in the most intellectual sphere, only one real kind of enemies and *damagers*: these are the comedians of this ideal—for they awake mistrust.”<sup>v</sup>

**LS:** In other words, not the scientists. Scientists are in fact the heirs and supporters of the ascetic ideal. Yes?

**Reader:** “Everywhere otherwise . . . in its severest and cleverest formulation—”

**LS:** Most spiritual formulation.

**Reader:** “most spiritual formulation, esoteric through . . . we, the most intellectual men—”

**LS:** No, the most spiritual men of this age.

**Reader:** “spiritual men of this age . . . forbids itself *the lie of the belief in God*.”<sup>vi</sup>

**LS:** This is the point which Nietzsche develops in the sequel about, say, a third of a page later in your translation. “All great things.”

---

<sup>iii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 24. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 784-85.

<sup>iv</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>v</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 27. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 790.

<sup>vi</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 27. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 790.

**Reader:** “go to ruin by reason of themselves . . . and perhaps also the most hopeful of all plays.”<sup>vii</sup>

**LS:** Yes. Now as Mr. [student] has made it very clear in his paper (which he hasn’t read to the class), this way of looking of things reminds very much of Hegel. There is a will to truth, the prohibition against lying—the unqualified prohibition against lying. A part of the biblical . . . and in a way the core of the biblical heritage. And this is connected originally with the Christian dogma. And then this probity turns against the Christian dogma, and the outcome of that is the Enlightenment or things connected with that. But then the more important step, at least for contemporary man, is when this probity turns against itself, questions itself, and the result is the questioning of the will to truth: it ceases to be the highest value, and given the fact that the will to truth in the sense of probity is the core of morality, it is *the* questioning of morality and something—not as most people at that time thought . . . can one preserve biblical morality without the biblical God? This was a very common view, and I believe it is still today quite common. With the faith in the biblical God, biblical morality as such—whether it is the morality of compassion or any other form—loses its basis and something entirely new must come somehow if man is not to perish into a mere vegetable like the last man. Now is this intelligible? Yes?

**Student:** There is a transition period, isn’t there, where . . . when the ethics has destroyed the dogma?

**LS:** Yes.

**Student:** That’s [that] the morality has destroyed the god, but it hasn’t yet shown that the morality can’t last?

**LS:** That is perfectly true. If you think of what happened in the eighteenth century where . . . in a way in Kant, the fact of utmost importance is the moral law, and the moral law as such says absolutely nothing about God. On the basis of the moral law, according to Kant, it becomes necessary to postulate the existence of God, but this could also be dropped and was dropped by people after Kant. But the general tendency of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century was to preserve morality, to give it the highest status, and religion comes or does not come afterward. At any rate, it has no longer the central place—well, the immense political importance is obvious, I take it. As long as religion in the sense of positive religion was the highest thing, there could not be a secular state. Is this not clear? It had to be a Protestant or Catholic, Islamic (or what have you) state. And now if morality becomes the center, i.e., something of which in principle every human being regardless of creed or what have you is capable, then you can have a secular society. That was the open or disguised basis of the secular state. And now the next step which was taken more clearly by Nietzsche than by anybody else was to raise this question: Can you preserve morality without its original basis, the holy God of the Bible? And Nietzsche’s answer is no; and therefore the question is: What can take

---

<sup>vii</sup> *Genealogy*, Third Essay, 27. *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, 791-92.

its place? And we have been given some notion that . . . Nietzsche gave some intimation that the consequence is not necessarily the last man, or an equivalent of that. And which are these intimations? Do you remember? Well, you have read the whole . . . these two books.

**Student:** The intimations that it won't be the last man? The philosopher of the future.

**LS:** But that is only . . . it is not clear what is the . . . how and to what extent is that a way out of their dilemma, that the stars which have guided mankind for millennia have lost their light. Man lives in complete darkness. Is there any prospect of new light?

**Student:** Well, the will to power.

**LS:** That is also I think not specific enough, although it is of course . . .

**Student:** Man's will to overcome himself.

**LS:** No, but looking around, here this whole tradition has lost its power and is in the process of losing its power ever more and more. One can easily anticipate the end . . . the continuation and end of this process. Is there no alternative in man's experience of himself? What does Nietzsche say about that?

**Student:** There was that passage where he was speaking of the large number of very useful employees and the stronger types, and he cited Napoleon as a forerunner and Caesar with the soul of Christ.

**LS:** Of Caesar of course [I?]<sup>viii</sup> hadn't spoken here. But . . . yes?

**Student:** There were the Jews who made life interesting for 2000 or more years.

**LS:** Yes, but on the other hand this comes now to an end.

**Student:** If it was able to happen once, he would say a similar thing could happen again.

**LS:** But there is no possibility to surpass that on his own terms.

**Student:** He mentioned that Russia was going to make Europe . . .

**LS:** Well, Russia at that time was a very Christian country which was touched by Europe to some extent and [ ]<sup>ix</sup> then to a peculiar version of nihilism and . . . or, like Tolstoy, the Christian morality. And that would be open to the same difficulty. Yes?

---

<sup>viii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>ix</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

**Student:** At the end of the last . . . at the end of the essay “‘Guilt’ and ‘Bad Conscience,’ etc.” Nietzsche makes clear that he sees himself as a precursor of Zarathustra, who will come later.

**LS:** Yes, but what does this mean?<sup>2</sup>

**Student:** Perhaps there will be another philosopher who will be able to . . .

**LS:** No, but in a way Nietzsche even himself to have shown the way.

**Student:** It will come to the European of the future whose base will be in Germany. Well, the main root of the European of the future will come from Germany. But he will be beyond . . .

**LS:** But what Germany? There was a democratic and socialist Germany with which Nietzsche didn’t wish to have anything to do. Then he had . . . on the right side there was the party of throne and altar, and he did everything to destroy the altar. So he had also nothing to do with that. What is the title of the first treatise of *The Genealogy of Morals*?

**Student:** “‘Good and Evil,’ ‘Good and Bad.’”

**LS:** Yes. In other words, there is another light of which we know apart from the Bible, and that is . . .

**Student:** Good/bad.

**LS:** Good/bad. And that is [concentrated?],<sup>x</sup> so to speak, according to Nietzsche especially in Greece, in pre-Socratic Greece. And there is . . . this is . . . the question is: Is this restorable in any way, or is it only an indication that there is in principle an alternative possible? Yes?

**Student:** It seems to me it’s the latter of the two you’ve just suggested, because our difficulty in answering your question so far, it seems to me, is pointed toward the fact that we’re all a little bit confused about just what Nietzsche is postulating as a possible future, if it’s anything but the last man.

**LS:** The last man is according to him the inevitable end of the process if no fundamental change in man takes place. But this “if” is very important. Incidentally, even in the Marxist literature—at least I remember it from Engels, where he speaks of the final society, the classless society, and he says this is necessary if civilization is not to perish. In other words, even here a man might have the choice rather to have the ruin of civilization than to have this kind of society. But this is of course in Engels not meant seriously: men will not be so irrational to wish that. In Nietzsche it is very serious. If men may [awaken from their dream] or they may remain in it, and if they awaken there is a

---

<sup>x</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

possibility to which he has pointed, helped by his knowledge of classical antiquity—but as was said by one of you today, it is not as simple because, as has been made clear in these writings of Nietzsche, the ascetic ideal or the biblical morality has so profoundly changed the human soul that a restoration of the pre-Christian soul is altogether impossible. And therefore the biblical morality will be an ingredient of the final morality, and I think we have had plenty of evidence for that. You remember the aphorism in *Beyond Good and Evil* when he says the man who said . . . loved men for the sake of God. This was such an enrichment of morality that this must somehow be preserved—of course not on a theistic basis [for Nietzsche?],<sup>xi</sup> but this is so. Yes. Mr. Bruell?

**Mr. Bruell:** Apparently art will have some . . . an important role in this other alternative, but Homer, as far as I know, wasn't understood by the people whom he affected as an artist. And that seems to be a problem.

**LS:** No—even the word poet is later than Homer. But in this reflection Nietzsche is in no way bound by the way in which Homer and his audience, his immediate audience, understood him. The notion of poet as we have it and as Nietzsche presupposes it in a way presupposes the emergence of the philosopher. Now Homer and his word is absolutely pre-philosophic, which doesn't mean that you cannot find in retrospect some germs of philosophy there. But philosophy is not there.

**Student:** But the people who read Homer and took him seriously—not merely aesthetically the way we do today, but as a guide and teacher—precisely didn't have philosophy or science to oppose in a way as a higher authority. I mean, how is it possible to take serious . . . with the required seriousness a creation that one knows to be merely a creation?

**LS:** Well, that is a very long question. But let me take out first one part of it. Homer and everything like him was an easy victim to philosophy, to Socrates. If Homer is asked by Socrates: What is virtue? Homer will stammer; and so in this great conflict between philosophy and poetry, philosophy is in the first place simply victorious. And one simple sign of that is that there were many centuries which did not know Homer but which did know Plato and Aristotle. It is easier to translate philosophy than poetry, as every one of you will know. Philosophy is more universal by nature than poetry is. So the philosophers won hands down, and the poets you had then—men like, say, Horace, and Virgil, and Dante, they all, and I believe also Shakespeare—admitted the superiority of philosophy; which doesn't mean that they admit superiority of professors of philosophy, whether in Oxford or Bologna or wherever it was. That goes without saying. But then there comes a crisis within philosophy, a crisis not unconnected with the fact that philosophy splits in the seventeenth century into philosophy on the one hand, and science on the other. And this science, which is much more narrow in its objective, is much more successful, and philosophy becomes ever more questionable . . . as a social force, surely. Science is a tremendous social force, as you only have to look here; but whether philosophy is a social force is extremely doubtful. Now . . . so in other words, the victorious philosophy, to use

---

<sup>xi</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

again terms resembling those used by Nietzsche, philosophy in a way turns against itself. And in the late nineteenth century, the time in which Nietzsche wrote, philosophy became then something which is not . . . is not identical, but similar to what is now called linguistic analysis, something which is at best one of the specialized sciences. It is no longer philosophy. Now that is . . . I think one can say that. And so philosophy becomes questionable, and therewith a new understanding of poetry or, generally called, art becomes possible, an understanding which claims to be much more artistic than the understanding of art by the artist of the past. I mean, you all must have observed from time to time when you read what is said in ancient times about poetry—I'm speaking not about Plato, which is so shocking that I do not wish even to repeat it, but in the great contest between Aeschylus and Euripides in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where a poet presents a contest between two great poets, the unquestioned premise of the whole contest is this: that it is the work of the poet to make the men in the city good. Who today could bear such a thing?

**Student:** [Inaudible]

**LS:** I think so, but at any rate for quite some time people could not speak of any subordination of art or poetry to ethics or politics except as discussed. I mean, the Communists do it in their way but that is nothing to boast about, and [ ].<sup>xii</sup> I do not know how they call it now . . . .

**Student:** It was last Socialist Realism—that is where you paint what you hear.

**LS:** And you describe these Stakhanovites and show how they marry a she-Stakhanovite and live happily ever after. Yes?

**Student:** What's the relation between classical philosophy and pre-Socratic Greece with regard to this good and bad? You said that good and bad is concentrated in pre-Socratic Greece.

**LS:** Well, I said for Nietzsche especially. All right, take Homer: contrast Achilles with [inaudible]<sup>xiii</sup>; you have a simple example of what I mean.

**Student:** What would Nietzsche's view of classical philosophy as distinguished from pre-Socratic . . . .

**LS:** For Nietzsche, classical philosophy meant Plato. Aristotle . . . he says hardly anything about Aristotle. And Plato is the arch-metaphysician—you know, the ideals, the transcendent ideas, depreciation of this life, of all becoming (we have read that)—so that Plato is such an enemy of the poets as in the Tenth Book of the *Republic*. That just fits into the picture, you know? That is no . . . and there is another statement later on (not in this work, in *Ecce Homo*, I believe) when he comes to speak of the Greeks in general and

---

<sup>xii</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xiii</sup> In original transcription: “[sounds like ‘Ascetes’].”

of Plato in particular, [and] he says in the first place the Romans are more important to him than the Greeks. And among the Greeks, especially Thucydides who is . . . belongs to what he calls the culture of the sophists, which was a realistic culture in contradistinction to the “idealistic” Socratic-Platonic culture. So that is . . . of Plato’s dialogues he says . . . he speaks of the childish dialectics, in other words that Socrates seems to believe he can settle these things by this. And of sophisms which he uses most of the time, and he says literally of the Platonic dialogues [that] they are boring. You must first see the situation as Nietzsche saw it, you know, and not demand something from him which he did not and could not give. In spite of that, that Nietzsche’s understanding of Plato is very inadequate and so on, and of Aristotle still more, Nietzsche could still be right, you know? It could still be possible. We have to investigate that: that despite his deplorably insufficient understanding of Plato and Aristotle and even Thucydides, he might have been right in the point which everyone would have granted him in his time, that Plato and Aristotle are *passé*.

**Student:** But forgetting Plato and Aristotle per se, does post-Socratic Greece and pre-Christian Rome represent in any way a different stage, either from good and bad or good and evil?

**LS:** Well, when he speaks of pre-Christian Rome and especially Caesar, of course, would be very important; this is the aristocratic morality. So the difference between Homeric morality and the morality of the early Romans is of no fundamental importance. Yes—you, and then you.

**Student:** This isn’t directly relevant to Nietzsche, so if you like don’t answer. Would you elucidate . . .

**LS:** I reserve that freedom always.

**Student:** Could you elucidate a little further your remark that linguistic philosophy is at best merely one of the specialized sciences?

**LS:** Because what does it tell us about the vital human questions?

**Student:** It certainly has been argued that linguistic philosophy is not restricted by its subject matter but simply is a method, and a method which could be applied to practically any subject matter.

**LS:** So in other words . . . in what sense it could be applied? You mean, say, a mineralogist would be helped in his work by being a linguistic analyst?

**Student:** Well, take a linguistic analyst such as Mr. Hare at Oxford<sup>xiv</sup>; [he] can look at morality and analyze questions of what is good and what is bad.

---

<sup>xiv</sup> R. M. Hare (b. 1919), author of *The Language of Morals* (1952), *Freedom and Reason* (1963).

**LS:** He can only analyze the meaning of good—say, in a certain time or in a certain country or in a certain group of society, but then he would be up against the question that in sixteenth-century France or fifteenth-century Florence people understood by a good man something very different, and regarding these questions he can only say, Well, I clarify the present usage, that's all I can do. Which is useful, within limits. But the question is, really, after all: What is a good man? Who is right, twenty 1967 Englishmen or these Florentines, or maybe some other people, or maybe there was not yet a man who was right.

**Student:** But it might of course be necessary before we decide what is a good man to decide, well, what might we mean . . . .

**LS:** The question is whether once this horizon of the substantive questions is abandoned the linguistic analysis would go deep enough. That is the question. I mean, you see, one cannot discuss the moral questions properly without a sufficiently broad horizon. I do not wish to mention any names but I remember I have read one of these books . . . he was not a linguistic analyst, he was one of these pre- . . . . I don't know how . . . at any rate one of the people who say there ain't no value judgments. And he discussed with great detail this whole province and one could see there was only one particular moral question of which he spoke of his own experience, i.e., to which he had given some concrete thought. And that was the question: Who is to be preferred, a loose but nice girl—probably his girlfriend—or a very straight-laced old Catholic landlady who opposed certain goings on? I must say that is . . . I would question the competence of that [ ].<sup>xv</sup> There are other questions. I can see that a young man in such a situation takes this side, and I can also understand the side of the [ ]<sup>xvi</sup> but it's not one of these really earthshaking questions. And I would say . . . I haven't read much of this literature but I have read some of it—and especially we have had here a very bright student, what was his name?

**Student:** Morrison?

**LS:** Morrison. He was a student of these people and wrote a very detailed and sympathetic analysis of them as a doctor's dissertation in this department, and you can have a look at it. This also was a further source of information for me because I had read some of them, but I cannot limit my time and so on, and I cannot . . . . What I had read seemed to show it was uninteresting, because the question in a way is a Socratic or Aristotelian question—is a linguistic question, if you want to put it that way. Aristotle in his *Ethics* says: What is magnanimity? He looks around, he hears which kind of men are praised as magnanimous and on account of what, and so on, and then he tries to form a coherent picture of that. But of course he has in mind the phenomenon of magnanimity, and he has not merely in mind the usage because the usage may be wrong. Simple case: there are sometimes things praised—say, sense of shame is praised as a virtue. And Aristotle, after some reflection on it, comes to the conclusion that sense of shame is to some extent praiseworthy but it is not truly a virtue, on the ground which may sound

---

<sup>xv</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xvi</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.



funny to you: that a grown-up and well-bred man won't do anything ever of which he ought to be ashamed, and therefore it is good for young people who are not yet so [ ].<sup>xvii</sup> And then in other cases he says there is a kind of defect corresponding to that virtue, and that defect doesn't have a name. For some reason he doesn't even give the reason why or speculate about it, but there could be nameless things which still are, and so on. So I think . . . but this is as you rightly said in passing, and I deserved your criticism because I shouldn't have made this passing remark. But Mr. Londow?

**Mr. Londow:** Getting back to the future . . . .

**LS:** To whom?

**Mr. Londow:** To the future. Does Nietzsche look forward to a society which is essentially homogeneous and in that sense in agreement with the contemporary ideal, or essentially heterogeneous and in that sense like the situation described [ ]<sup>xviii</sup> in *Beyond Good and Evil* where society is . . . fundamentally consists of two parts, if not more? And if the latter, in what sense does he project a . . . one goal for all of humanity?

**LS:** Well, one goal—that is in one sense of course impossible from his point of view, as you know, because . . . you remember the section on the virtues in *Zarathustra*? That each one has . . . each one's virtue must be peculiar to him, and so on? So what he means, then—I mean, that is also already making it more rigid than it is stated by Nietzsche, the super[man], and not all men in that age would be supermen. There will be a variety; and also [based on] these reflections, what should be done to the underprivileged? There might be some descendants of the ascetic priests who would have to take care of their problem. Perhaps they would be now called differently; they could be called social workers, psychoanalysts, or what have you. But still that would be non-supermen helping non-supermen. Nietzsche doesn't even deign to speak about that. For him the main point is the highest kind, the authoritative kind of being, but there is nothing novel in that. When Aristotle looks for the best life in the *Ethics*, he finds out then that the best life is the contemplative life. Well, and what about those, the large majority, who are unable or unwilling perhaps to engage in the contemplative life? That's not his worry. That everyone can figure out that their value will depend on the degree to which they approach that best life, yes? In one way you are quite right, and that is of course the great difficulty that Nietzsche speaks in very general terms of the future. He doesn't show a concrete way, a policy leading up. That is his great disadvantage compared with Marx, and therefore Marx could lead to Lenin and to everything else which is probably also a deterioration of Marx, but still there is some genuine connection; whereas what Nietzsche did led at most politically to such figures as Mussolini and Hitler, where the disproportion is much more glaring than in the case of Lenin and even of Stalin. Yes? No, were you first, Mr. Bolotin? All right.

---

<sup>xvii</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xviii</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

**Student:** The persistence of the superman once he emerges seems to depend especially on answering the question about the lower kind, because Nietzsche's own view of past history seems to establish the [danger to nobility?]<sup>xix</sup> of the sick caring for the sick. And therefore without some attention to the political order in which this superman is able to live . . . .

**LS:** Well, what Nietzsche says you know more or less from what we have heard. There is not much more in his other works about that—an aristocracy, a new aristocracy, which the forms were under which they rule, where there would be something like a senate [ ]<sup>xx</sup> or what have you; there is nothing in Nietzsche about that. That is . . . must be noted but one doesn't find any guidance in these matters in Nietzsche.

**Student:** I understand that it will necessarily be a form of aristocratic rule, but what I meant was that the past has indicated that when the sick are allowed to develop their own means of dealing with their sickness, the aristocracy is overcome. And therefore it seems . . . would seem to be imperative in the future for the aristocrat to give particular attention to how the sick can be dealt with so that . . . .

**LS:** Oh, well there are various . . . Nietzsche didn't develop it, but use your common sense. I mean you have to . . . presumably you must have armies. That was surely in the pre-nuclear age, no question; must have armies, and if you want to have armies you must have lots of privates, also non-commissioned officers, and this would not be normally sick people. I mean, they might be stupid and unintellectual or what have you, but they must be quite healthy and tough guys. Well, they could take care easily of any nuisance created by the sick people and their wars. I mean, I just figured that out on the spur of the moment, but Nietzsche has never said it, that goes without saying. There would be of course a stratified society as every society hitherto was and there would also be . . . and not everyone who does not belong to the upper strata is for this reason moribund, as . . . I think that's elementary, isn't it?<sup>3</sup>

**Student:** I only see the [dual?]<sup>xxi</sup> valuations in everything that he's established . . . .

**LS:** Well, that can't be helped, given the duality or the more than duality of men. If this is a fault in Nietzsche, it is also a fault in Plato and Aristotle. If there is a variety of human beings on a variety of levels, there must be a variety of ways of life or, to use the language of Nietzsche, a variety of values. This doesn't lead to relativism for the simple reason [that]<sup>4</sup> there is an order of rank of these various values. Is that so difficult to understand? Morality as Nietzsche understands it in the narrower sense, when he says he is an immoralist, means that there is one rule valid for all men and compliance with that rule is the most important thing in life. That is what Nietzsche calls morality, and in this sense he is an immoralist. But in this sense I would also say Plato and Aristotle are immoralists, because Plato and Aristotle too would say [that] complying with certain

---

<sup>xix</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xx</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xxi</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

rules valid for all men—say, not stealing and not robbing, and so on and so on—does not make a man a very impressive figure. There are quite a few people who without fear of the police abstain from murder, robbery, and so on, and are not . . . they are nice people. I mean we can only wish there would be more of them, but it is not . . . doesn't solve the question what is the best human life, because this is not enough. Now, I think now Mr. Bolotin, thank you.

**Mr. Bolotin:** I want to get back to your suggestion [ ]<sup>xxii</sup> what you said about *The Genealogy of Morals*, and specifically the entry of art. You said that the reason that art became more important than truth is because the truth is that human life is meaningless. When people today talk about human life as meaningless, there is certainly a suspicious moral basis behind it. I don't . . . you don't accept it as truth. They have a grudge or they have a reason for saying that, and isn't that . . . how does Nietzsche know that [ ]<sup>xxiii</sup> to say that human life is meaningless isn't in itself a kind of interpretation of . . .

**LS:** No, but he would say that it's implied in that whole development which he traces to Copernicus at the beginning and which goes on and on. Man's place in the whole . . . man loses his place. According to the biblical notion, man is the only being created in the image of God. Aristotle of course did not say that, but for Aristotle it is clear that man, this being living on earth, center of the universe, which alone is able . . . is open to everything—not only to the intellectual things but to the sensible as well—the only being which is open to the whole. That is a meaningful being because it makes sense that there should be such a being in a complete universe, [a being] which is open to every ingredient of the universe. Now according to the modern view, man came into being by some causal necessity, probably, but fundamentally contingent. If things had been a little bit different, the conditions for human life wouldn't have been. Man is an accident, a contingent being—and furthermore (which is connected with that), anything which he regards as good or noble has no support except his willing it.

I mean, popular social science doctrine—values are . . . how do they formulate it? It's a long time that I have read this kind of thing. What is the origin of values? Well, somehow by some psychic mechanism individual A holds value Alpha, individual B value Beta, and so on. That is all there is to it and there is . . . it is nonsense to raise the question whether . . . which of these values deserves higher respect than the other. You must have heard that. Good. So that which . . . whatever man esteems, what he regards as the meaning of his life, depends entirely in the last resort on an act of his will. Without an act of the will it is meaningless. And in a way, Nietzsche has made this clearer than anyone before him, this state of affairs, and he says—well, that's it; [it is] this act of the will, this establishing values, that makes him a human being. Most people don't do that, most people simply accept the values imposed on them by their society by traditions or what have you. And in most cases these values are based on presuppositions—which presuppositions have become doubtful, and they don't pay any attention to that, they just go on. And what men . . . the creative act and the creative men—that is the thing which

---

<sup>xxii</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

counts. And the theoretical expression, the best theoretical expression [ ]<sup>xxiv</sup> the will to power. Now I don't know whether I answered your question properly.

**Student:** Okay, can I ask one more, then? In the beginning of this semester you talked about the same kind of things and you said that the truth as men of Nietzsche's time had discovered it was deadly.

**LS:** That was Nietzsche's view.

**Student:** Right. This led in existentialism to a notion of subjective truth which is deeper, which is something which is deeper than objective truth. And you cautioned us not to assume that this was Nietzsche's understanding.

**LS:** No, but it throws some light on Nietzsche, that I would not deny. It is not Nietzsche because Nietzsche precisely . . . whereas existentialism is incompatible with a doctrine like that of the will to power, let us call it a metaphysical doctrine—Nietzsche was very much concerned with such doctrines. That is a great . . . that is characteristic of Nietzsche; if you please it is his great failure. But here we are.

I will try to restate the issue. What Nietzsche believes to have discovered was this: that there are no things which are values in and by themselves—say by nature, or in particular by human nature, or by virtue of reason. All values have been . . . owe their origin to acts of the human will, individual or collective. And Nietzsche calls the will thus understood the will to power. Men are trying to overcome themselves. That is Nietzsche's way of understanding what traditionally would have been [understood as] deference. Every human being who is not utterly contemptible looks up to something. Now what Nietzsche says, that to which he looks up is not up there by itself by nature, or because reason is higher than any other act, but it has been put there in order . . . so that man would overcome himself, would reach a higher range. This has happened all the time but people have never understood that. In the first place, people have believed that this . . . the values, to use Nietzsche's term, are there by nature. That is of course the traditional view. I mean, you can if you want to say that Platonic ideas are values; that has been said by many people and in a provisional way that is bearable assertion. And then there came the great . . . even with the emergence of modern science and in particular English empiricism, this did not so fundamentally change because then they [sought? saw?]<sup>xxv</sup> in the human soul or in the consciousness a natural basis for the distinction between good and bad. Look at Hume's *Treatise Concerning Human Nature*. The decisive change, as far as I can see, came with Kant, with Kant's demand that . . . with Kant's assertion that man, in order to be truly good, cannot possibly be . . . live . . . or be guided by the apron-strings of nature. If he is that, if he chooses X in preference to Y by virtue of a natural inclination in the old sense of the word, then he is really a slave of nature. But man is supposed to be free. Freedom is not possible if morality does not originate in the individual—that is to say, if morality does not consist in legislating for oneself by

---

<sup>xxiv</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xxv</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

oneself. And Kant held, however, that that legislating thing in us is reason, and therefore there would be no difficulty because it . . . everyone legislates for himself, not looking at anybody else but [always? all we?]<sup>xxvi</sup> reach the same result, because it is reason which legislates. I hope to take up the question of Kant in the next quarter.

Now this Nietzsche . . . this Kantian view led to certain difficulties into which we cannot go. Let us make that big jump from Kant to Nietzsche. Nietzsche also is concerned with self-legislation, but for him this means self-overcoming, but this means that the law which an individual imposes on himself will differ necessarily from the law which another individual imposes on himself, so much so that it would be impossible to say that there is absolutely nothing which might not be sanctified by some act of legislation. That . . . I mean, although it would require a bit of imagination to apply this to all kinds of seamy things, but in principle that is so. There is no . . . neither nature nor reason can guide us.

Hitherto, according to Nietzsche—to repeat—the will to power has been effective in all moralities. They all owe their being, all these [moralities] owe their being to acts of the will to power. Nietzsche is the first to discover this fact, and Nietzsche in a way believes that because he knows the true ground of all possible human evaluations, i.e., of all possible establishments of value, he can establish *the* true and final value system. Does this make sense? When he refers, for example, to [the claim] that history is hitherto just chance and nonsense, that means here this people, there that people, and so on and so on—here this individual, there that individual, established his or its values. And that was good because that was the only way in which man could come out of that original bestial stage into a human condition, but there was no order, no coherence: there was no Hegelian necessity that Persia would come before Greece and Persia would therefore be lower than Greece and the other things which Hegel said, and said in retrospect this is a necessary process. It is not a necessary process at all; it is chance. But in the moment the principle is discovered—as Nietzsche claims that he does—in that moment it becomes possible to put an end to chance, to establish the one goal of mankind. You remember “One Thousand One Goals” in *Zarathustra*, which we read, and that is what Nietzsche claims to do. Yes?

**Student:** Would you make clear why this should be the one goal? I’m not sure . . . I don’t see it.

**LS:** Because that is . . . he finds behind the infinite variety of phenomena an infinitely many value systems. He finds behind the infinite variety of phenomena the single root, an elementary scientific procedure; and therefore, having found that single root, he can draw the conclusion from this discovery: namely, the one goal. People could not find that one goal because they did not know the truth, they did not know the root of all value [establishing?].<sup>xxvii</sup>

---

<sup>xxvi</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

**Student:** But what is that one goal?

**LS:** It is no difficulty to give you an answer, a verbal answer: namely, the superman, philosopher of the future, as quite [a number?]<sup>xxviii</sup> of you said before. You can develop that—I mean, to some extent we have tried to do that. It is [ ].<sup>xxix</sup> Yes?

**Student:** The only hard thing to understand is that he should define it, because if precisely the will to power is at the root of all things, it would seek to overcome this goal . . . .

**LS:** But if you have found *the* root, sure[ly] you can spread it and you can clarify quite a few unclarities, and you can dispose of many (very many) loose ends, but the fundamental inside itself cannot change. I mean it may change, but that would be a sheer [dictate?]<sup>xxx</sup> and therefore of no interest. But you cannot truly transcend it. Mr. Vitullo.

**Mr. Vitullo:** Speaking metaphorically, Nietzsche says that men once saw stars by which they guided themselves and enlightened themselves, but now he realizes, or men should realize that these stars were [ ],<sup>xxxi</sup> light, for instance—matches, men striking matches, and that the . . . it seemed to me . . . now, is it fair to say of Nietzsche that what he says now is that men should strike matches and hold them up, and that will be the light by which they see themselves? And if he says this, then is it a problem . . . does he face the problem that there's no need . . . it seems that you're just lighting a match and are your own light, and there's no way to ascend, there's no way . . . you're in a sense confirming yourself as you are? Why go anywhere? What would make you change?

**LS:** Well the metaphor of the match is not very good, and you can say of course [that] I was wrong in speaking of light in the first place and so [ ]<sup>xxxii</sup> not a match. But I fail to follow you. I mean, men have hitherto believed—I must only repeat myself, perhaps you can then state more clearly what you mean—hitherto men have believed that there are values valid in and by themselves by nature or by reason. This, to say nothing of [ ]<sup>xxxiii</sup> God himself—these beliefs have lost their power and the next consequence is of course nihilism, despair. But this is unacceptable to Nietzsche, as it would be to many people. And therefore the question arises: What alternative exists there after the traditional values, i.e., their foundations, have been found wanting? And then he says we must have . . . discover the true foundation which these old values had, although their believers did not know it: namely, the will to power. And having this insight into the root of all values which they completely lacked, by this very insight we are enabled to set the true values.

---

<sup>xxviii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xxix</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xxx</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

**Student:** It would seem that precisely because this one thing is the root of all values and it's the root of all values equally, it doesn't give any guidance. I mean no matter what value you pick, it's always going to be . . . .

**LS:** But the point is this. At the moment . . . in the moment this is achieved . . . . I mean this nihilism comes in the devaluation of all earlier values; when this is achieved, the man in this situation, the heir of these traditions, is . . . will preserve in a radically modified manner the heritage more concretely, the superman will be a synthesis of Greece or Rome and Judea: Caesar with the soul of Christ. So in other words, that is connected with what we [ ]<sup>xxxiv</sup> Nietzsche's essential historicism. The insight into the failure of all traditional value understanding belongs to a specific historical situation. It presupposes a specific heritage, and without that heritage we would have to begin like our ancestral cave-dwellers from scratch. But overcoming, self-overcoming, means also and especially to overcome the highest hitherto; therefore you have to know that highest hitherto. But you realize at the same time that it no longer . . . is no longer compelling, obligatory. Yes?

**Student:** Is Nietzsche similar to Marx in the sense of consciousness? Like the [inaudible].

**LS:** Yes. Something . . . . There is a kind of unconscious Hegelianism in Nietzsche. In Marx that Hegelianism was of course conscious.

**Student:** You raised before the question, considering the subsequent history of Nietzsche's thoughts we can ask reasonably, was Nietzsche responsible in stating them as clearly as he did. But considering Nietzsche's thought that his thought was the culmination of the historical process, which was in a way inevitable, could this have been suppressed?

**LS:** You see, the point is this: What does inevitable mean? The inevitable thing was, from Nietzsche's point of view, what has happened up to this point and the peculiar inclination which modern European man now has toward the last man. The . . . first of all, the awareness of the situation was lacking. That Nietzsche achieved. But secondly, the way out, which is more than the awareness of the situation, is itself a creative act which cannot be produced, or however you call it, from the situation. Otherwise it wouldn't be a creative act.

**Student:** What would you suggest, then, that Nietzsche does? Does he just write less clearly?

**LS:** I beg your pardon?

---

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

**Student:** What would you suggest that Nietzsche do in order to be responsible? When if you raised that writing the way he did he might have been irresponsible, considering what happened later.

**LS:** Well, I think he went very far especially in the last year and would say he takes all the responsibility. Better a certain terrible thing than going on into that condition of the last man. By the way, the last man—this was taken up after Nietzsche by Spengler. Did you ever read his *Decline of the West*? That is interesting. He takes the last man for granted, and therefore Nietzsche was just a romantic, you know, someone who was opposing the inevitable. And the end would be what he calls universal fellahinism. You know what fellahins are, the poor Egyptian peasants. So a state of . . . people will just drift, will just drift and generate children and try to get some food—whether more or less doesn't make any difference, but the meaningless life. That is a repetition of Nietzsche's vision of the last man.

**Student:** Is the existence of the thousand and one goals originating in the different gradations and classes of man, how is the existence of the one true goal compatible with the fact that society will continue to have gradations? Don't the other classes still have their own valuations?

**LS:** I said this before: Why not? I mean, that is no different in Nietzsche from what it is in Plato and Aristotle. There are in Plato in the *Republic* the most famous case: three classes. Let there be fifteen, the principle is not affected by that. And there would be different ways of life in the different ones. And the key point, however, is that in the highest class as Nietzsche understands it there would be the greatest wealth of individuals, of human beings with radical differences of characters and so on. Individual . . . individual personalities.

**Student:** Well, what puzzles me, I mean, is that Nietzsche as opposed to Plato and Aristotle has to rest his analysis of values on a historicist kind of analysis, which seems to say that since people value these things, therefore these things are values.

**LS:** Oh, no. Such a nonsense he would never say. I mean, that is after all a very gross *non sequitur* of which only very unintelligent people are capable, but surely not Nietzsche.

**Student:** The fact that anything is in principle possible of being sanctified.

**LS:** No, Nietzsche gives a reason for that. I mean part of the reason is that induction. Wherever we look, he says, and find a high culture, it was an aristocratic culture; and therefore if we want to get out of the danger which threatens present day Europe we must look forward to a future aristocratic society. That is . . . and aristocratic society means a stratified . . . and the other things follow from that. You wanted . . .



**Student:** I was going to ask, Nietzsche's idea of [the worth of all man's?]<sup>xxxv</sup> values enables him to suggest that . . . the possibility of infinite individuals, but doesn't it also suggest the possibility of manipulation of this worth, once you have an understanding of it, hence complete control?

**LS:** You mean of the lower strata?

**Student:** Well, I mean, for example, that simply understanding of the root can also imply control of it more than simply . . . .

**LS:** Well, I think the superman as described or defined by Nietzsche is of course a man who is not manipulated and cannot be manipulated. But whether there would be manipulation in the political processes going on in such a society, I do not know. I'm not aware that Nietzsche discussed it. But I would say both answers . . . probably there would be some manipulation regarding the lower strata.

**Student:** The whole system or the whole future seems to me to be dependent upon the truth which he asserts in paragraph 27 of the last treatise, that God in fact does not exist. And we began our discussion by his . . . your remarks about his [valuing?]<sup>xxxvi</sup> the truth. And it seems to me that his whole thinking about the future, his whole vision of the superman and the philosopher of the future, depends upon a truth—that is, that God does not exist.

**LS:** Yes, but . . . all right. But what does this truth mean? It is in a sense a purely negative truth. And if you think it out you might come to two very different conclusions. It is an indescribable liberation, the view of the ordinary atheists. But also the view which Nietzsche stresses more, it is an indescribable impoverishment by itself. And therefore . . . .

**Student:** When Augustine's talking about freeing men from being subject to Christian morality, Augustine in the context says that to be free from Christian morality you must be subject to it, and so internalize your subjection that you accept it [unconditionally?],<sup>xxxvii</sup> if I've got that right. Does Nietzsche say something quite similar in that can his superman . . . can his superman be what he is to be without first being in a sense even better than the Christian . . . .

**LS:** Sure. In principle, yes, that Nietzsche makes quite clear. It doesn't mean that he has to become a monk in a Syrian or Egyptian desert for twenty years, not so literally, but he has to study theology for many years. But in a deeper sense, he must have this heritage within himself. Otherwise he will fall much below its possibilities.

---

<sup>xxxv</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

**Student:** But Nietzsche has this idea that the heritage is necessarily within modern man . . . .

**LS:** Modern man is the heir to both traditions. I mean there is nothing . . . that's a fact and one cannot wish it away from any point of view. And the question . . . but since these traditions, both Greek and the Biblical, have lost their basis according to Nietzsche, it becomes necessary to find a new basis which preserves the best of the two traditions, and yet puts them on that new basis.

**Student:** Doesn't Nietzsche neglect the view of science, which would hold that science is the source of power to change what has hitherto been accidental and contingent?

**LS:** Well, science is powerful but it cannot supply the ends for which power is to be used.

**Student:** But in 28, I mean in the last paragraph of *Genealogy of Morals*, the analysis of man's position is based on the view that he's an accident, that his being in the world is contingent, and that the only thing he has that is truly his is his will. And the question is whether science doesn't give him the power to change precisely what has been hitherto regarded as accidental and enlarge what is his own.

**LS:** But the main point he makes in number 28 is that the ascetic ideal was the only one hitherto which gave human life meaning. This ascetic ideal has lost its power. In its original form and in its up-to-date-form, namely, as the spirit of science, it doesn't supply any meaning. Therefore we must find something else. Now the point which he makes here . . . the ultimate justification of the ascetic ideal is this: the ascetic ideal being other-worldly, opposed to this life, says "no" to the world, says "no" to life. And therefore one can say, as Nietzsche does, the ascetic ideal is a will of nothingness. And there he makes this remark which I have made before: man would rather will nothingness than not will. And this fact, that not [to] will, that man abhors not willing, but wills will, is . . . points to a possible future, namely, willing not nothingness, willing not another world, willing . . . but willing the earth, etc., the other things stated in *Zarathustra*.

**Student:** But does Nietzsche neglect that science itself, rather than being representative of the ascetic ideal, could become precisely that?

**LS:** Oh, as a servant, why not? That's uninteresting. But it cannot be the master, that's the main thing. The master. It cannot guide men. It can be an excellent servant, slave, or whatever you call it. But it cannot be the master. And eighteen/nineteenth century science still claimed it could be the master. In the meantime people have learned that, scientists have learned that. Yes?

**Student:** So far the specific expressions of the will to power have been in a sense completely arbitrary. They are determined neither by reason nor nature or else to some extent they're dependent on specific historical situations. How could one have a morality based on the will to power per se that would be free of the sort of legal arbitrariness? I mean arbitrariness is the kiss of death . . . .

**LS:** It's impossible. That is, according to Nietzsche impossible. I mean we—say, we modern men, we nineteenth-century Europeans, if we can say [ ],<sup>xxxviii</sup> are such and such, with these and these possibilities and these and these dangers. That is a starting point. There is a problem given with that situation, and what the problem would have been for someone . . . for an old Teuton in the fourth century of the Christian era, that is not Nietzsche's worry. Can't blame him for that. And this is a unique period because these traditions of millennia are now breaking down and most people don't even see it, Nietzsche says. And therefore he must [ ]<sup>xxxix</sup> this situation. And there is . . . Nietzsche's thought is in this sense essentially historical, there is no question. And the will to power itself would not give an answer because the will to power finds . . . suggests infinitely many solutions. Think of the human being, a very poor fish in skid row who helps another fellow in skid row and thus actualizes his will to power. We have read this, and so on. Then . . . there are infinitely many. But the question is what is the highest form of which the will to power will take? Now that's the last. Mr. [student]?

**Student:** At the beginning of the term, you spoke a little bit about the doctrine of the eternal return of the [ ]<sup>xl</sup>, and I wonder if you could talk just a little bit about how this doctrine fits in with Nietzsche's projections for the future of the superman. Does this mean that the superman will one day decay and pass away or . . .

**LS:** Sure he will. I mean, that Nietzsche takes for granted that this planet will not last forever and there will be a decay, there is no question. And . . . but there will be eternal return, i.e., whatever has been at any time, say *ichthyosauri*, *ichthyosauri*, [ ],<sup>xli</sup> or whatever you take, they will come back—on another planet.

**Student:** Doesn't this mean then that the superman is not really the master of chance but that he has to pass away, too?

**LS:** To that extent, if you call that chance. That is . . . that's impossible. But even for the Marxist these problems also exist. I have occasionally emphasized this even in print, that according to Engels there will be a way down after this magnificent classless society, this peak of human history. But Engels has only this solace: that's a long way out . . . off; we don't have to worry about that now. But can you tell me anyone living today outside of lunatic asylum who does not believe—I say deliberately believe and not know, because very few people are sufficiently trained—who does not believe that life on this planet will come to an end, say in three or four or five, six billions of years (that is a secondary consideration)? Do you know anyone? Did you ever hear that? Since . . . I mean whereas [ ]<sup>xlii</sup> Aristotle, and that is one reason why he is so always attractive. [ ]<sup>xliii</sup> Aristotle says there will always be human beings: man and his son generate man; there cannot have

---

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xl</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xli</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xlii</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

<sup>xliii</sup> Brackets inserted by the original transcriber.

been a first man. How could he possibly come into being without being generated by a male and female human being? And for the same reason there will never be a last man. And this solves many questions and [that is one?].<sup>xliv</sup> Unfortunately, we can no longer believe that. That is perhaps the root of all our troubles and maybe even of the troubles of Nietzsche, because the question of the meaninglessness of man—you know, becoming just the inhabitant . . . temporary inhabitant of a negligible planet in a negligible planetary system. This didn't exist.

I would love to continue the discussion, but I'm sorry I can't. Now I wish you a pleasant vacation.

[end of session]

---

<sup>1</sup> Deleted “. . . quest . . . “

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “This is a . . . no . . . yes?”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “Is . . . I mean . . . is this not . . . . “

<sup>4</sup> Changed from “because.”

---

<sup>xliv</sup> Material in brackets inserted by the original transcriber.